

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD
OCTOBER 7, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council Room, 374 East Main,
Vernal, Utah 84078.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Randel Mills, Robin O'Driscoll, Ed Long, and Nick Porter and Mayor Corey Foley. Councilmember Ted Munford was excused from the meeting.

WELCOME: Mayor Corey Foley welcomed everyone to the meeting. He noted Councilmember Ted Munford's absence and excused him from the meeting.

INVOCATION OR UPLIFTING THOUGHT: The invocation was given by Mayor Corey Foley.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Water Superintendent Ivan Merrell.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD
SEPTEMBER 16, 2026**

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to approve the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting held September 16, 2026. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD
SEPTEMBER 23, 2026**

Councilmember Randel Mills moved to approve the minutes of the Special City Council Meeting held September 23, 2026. Councilmember Ed Long seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD
SEPTEMBER 30, 2026**

Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the minutes of the Special City Council Meeting held September 30, 2026. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.

**CONSIDER THE COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEERISM PROCLAMATION - SARA
BELL**

City Recorder Sara Bell explained that, during the previous City Council meeting, Anna Weston and Sylvia Henderson with JustServe presented Mayor Corey Foley and Vernal City with the Heart of Service Award in recognition of the City's commitment to volunteerism. As part of the recognition, Vernal City was challenged to become a JustServe City, which includes adopting a proclamation demonstrating the City's commitment to volunteerism. Ms. Bell presented the proposed proclamation for Council consideration and noted that Anna Weston and Sylvia Henderson were in attendance to answer any questions.

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Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to approve the Commitment to Volunteerism Proclamation as presented. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

Following the motion, Ms. Bell explained that the proclamation would be signed, stamped with the official City seal, and submitted to JustServe. She noted that the next step toward becoming a JustServe City would be to continue encouraging meaningful volunteerism throughout the community. She highlighted the variety of volunteer opportunities available through local organizations and the JustServe website.

Mayor Corey Foley expressed appreciation for the community's strong tradition of volunteerism and willingness to help neighbors in need. He thanked Anna Weston and Sylvia Henderson for attending and for the opportunity to participate in the JustServe City initiative.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF A CONTRACT WITH DORSETT CONTROLS FOR SCADA UPGRADES - IVAN MERRELL

Water Superintendent Ivan Merrell presented a proposed contract with Dorsett Controls for upgrades to the City's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, which monitors and controls water system operations. He explained that \$170,000 had been allocated for the project in the current budget, with a proposed contract amount of \$158,316.35. He recommended waiving the competitive bidding process to utilize Dorsett Controls, noting that Ashley Valley Water and Sewer Improvement District currently uses the same provider and has been satisfied with its services. He emphasized that using a common provider would support potential future coordination and unification of water services throughout the valley.

Mr. Merrell explained that the upgrades would include a complete software overhaul, replacement of hardware at existing monitoring sites, and a vendor-hosted server to improve system reliability and cybersecurity. The improvements would also allow for remote monitoring and control of the water system and accommodate future additions, including flow meters to better track water distribution throughout the City. He noted that the existing system was outdated and did not meet current cybersecurity standards, emphasizing the importance of protecting critical water infrastructure from potential cyberattacks.

Discussion followed regarding ongoing service costs, cybersecurity protections, and contract terms. Mr. Merrell explained that cellular monitoring sites would incur a recurring fee of \$15 per site, with additional costs associated with server hosting. He indicated that the vendor-hosted system was expected to be more cost-effective than maintaining a City-owned server. He also noted that City Attorney Clark McClellan had reviewed the agreement and that he believed the contract operated on an annual basis.

Mr. Merrell further explained that the existing system required staff to access monitoring equipment from the office, creating challenges when responding to emergencies or system alerts outside regular working hours. The proposed upgrades would allow staff to remotely monitor

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system pressures, respond to alarms, and make necessary adjustments, improving efficiency and response times.

Mayor Corey Foley expressed support for the improvements and their benefits to the City's water infrastructure. Councilmembers also expressed support for utilizing the same SCADA provider as Ashley Valley Water and Sewer Improvement District.

Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the contract with Dorsett Controls for SCADA system upgrades in the amount of \$158,316.35. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

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

Following the vote, Councilmember Randel Mills requested that Mr. Merrell provide the Council with additional information regarding the ongoing monthly service and hosting costs.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF TASK ORDER 1 FOR AIRPORT TERMINAL DESIGN - KEN CAMPBELL

Vernal Regional Airport Director Ken Campbell presented Task Order No. 1 for the design of an expansion to the Vernal Regional Airport terminal. He explained that the Airport had successfully secured federal grant funding for the project after several years of pursuing the opportunity. The original proposal involved replacing the existing terminal, however, after evaluating costs, it was determined that expanding the current facility would be more financially feasible.

Mr. Campbell explained that the proposed expansion would add approximately 6,000 square feet to the northeast side of the terminal, providing additional seating for approximately 100 passengers, a second gate to accommodate future airline growth, and additional restrooms beyond the security checkpoint. The improvements would also address accessibility requirements and provide additional space to support the Airport's future needs. He noted that efforts would be made to incorporate exterior improvements to the existing building to create a consistent appearance.

Mr. Campbell further explained that the federal reimbursement rate for airport improvements would decrease from 95% to 90% beginning in the next fiscal year. To take advantage of the higher reimbursement rate, he successfully requested that the design phase be moved forward into the current year. Task Order No. 1, totaling \$501,562, would therefore qualify for 95% federal funding, leaving a local share of approximately \$25,000. He clarified that the task order included the complete architectural design and construction-ready plans rather than preliminary planning alone.

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Discussion followed regarding the cost of the design phase and the anticipated construction expenses. Mr. Campbell explained that the construction phase was currently estimated at approximately \$4 million, with a 90% federal contribution anticipated. The remaining 10% local share would be addressed during future budget discussions. He emphasized that approval of the current task order would not commit the City to construction expenses, which would be presented separately following completion of the design phase.

Mayor Corey Foley expressed support for the expansion, noting that additional restrooms and passenger accommodations had been needed for several years. Councilmember Ed Long questioned the design cost but acknowledged the significant improvements and successes achieved at the Airport under Mr. Campbell's leadership. City Manager Quinn Bennion clarified that the proposed task order covered the complete design process and noted that Uintah County had approved the task order the previous day.

Councilmember Randel Mills moved to approve Task Order No. 1 for the Airport Terminal Design in the amount of \$501,562, as presented. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

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

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CLOCK / BELL TOWER IN THE COMMUNITY PLAZA - QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion explained that a local donor, who wishes to remain anonymous at this time, approached Uintah County with an interest in funding a tower to recognize community volunteers, particularly volunteer firefighters, search and rescue personnel, and those involved with the Chamber of Commerce. The County suggested the new Community Plaza as a potential location, and City staff have since worked with the donor to develop a concept that complements the planned downtown improvements.

Mr. Bennion explained that the donor intends to fully fund the project, including the tower's construction, installation, and exterior finish using locally sourced stone. The donor anticipates the project costing approximately \$200,000 to \$300,000, although the final cost could be higher. The donation would potentially be facilitated through Charitable Friends of Ashley Valley, with an agreement outlining the responsibilities of the donor and the City. Upon completion, the tower would become City property, and the donor has expressed interest in establishing a fund to assist with recognition plaques and future maintenance.

Mr. Bennion reviewed conceptual designs developed by City staff and MHTN Architects, explaining that the preferred design incorporates both a functional bell and clocks visible from all four sides. The donor envisions a tower approximately 60 feet tall, with a natural stone exterior

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and architectural features that complement the Community Plaza. The proposed location would be near the farmers market building and food truck court. He noted that consideration would need to be given to the placement of the tower in relation to a potential future lookout tower included in the plaza's master plan.

Mayor Corey Foley expressed appreciation for the donor's generosity and the opportunity to recognize volunteers who dedicate significant time and effort to the community. Councilmember Nick Porter supported the proposed location and emphasized the value of incorporating a prominent architectural feature into the plaza. Councilmember Randel Mills agreed, expressing support for the four-sided clock design and the opportunity to work with a community member interested in contributing to the project.

Discussion followed regarding the donor's desire to complete construction during the summer of 2027 and how that timeline would align with the Community Plaza improvements. Mr. Bennion explained that the first phase of construction would establish the necessary grading and infrastructure, allowing the tower to be installed before the surrounding amenities are completed. Mayor Foley also asked about long-term maintenance, particularly the materials proposed for the upper portion of the tower. Mr. Bennion noted that the donor preferred metal rather than wood, which could reduce maintenance requirements, and that access would be provided for servicing the clock and bell.

Mr. Bennion requested Council approval of the general concept to allow staff and the donor to proceed with additional design development, pricing, and coordination with the tower manufacturer.

Councilmember Nick Porter moved to approve the conceptual design presented by MHTN Architects for the clock and bell tower in the Community Plaza and authorize the continuation of the planning process. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE LAMPLIGHTER HOTEL SALVAGE AND DISPOSITION - QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion provided an update on the upcoming demolition of the Lamplighter Hotel and requested Council direction regarding the disposition of remaining furnishings and materials. He explained that all tenants had been notified to vacate the building by the end of November. Following their departure, the previous property owners would have a 30-day period to salvage furnishings and equipment, as outlined in the City's original purchase agreement. Asbestos abatement is anticipated to begin in January, with demolition tentatively scheduled for March or April.

Mr. Bennion explained that, unlike the previously demolished motel, the hotel contains several items that may hold monetary or sentimental value to community members, including original wooden doors, decorative lighting, glass-paneled doors, and other architectural features. He outlined several options for disposing of the remaining materials, including allowing the

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demolition contractor to salvage items, hiring an auctioneer, conducting a public sale or silent auction, or offering items to local charitable organizations. He noted that the City had previously allowed charitable organizations to select items from the motel, while Central Cove Elementary had successfully conducted a silent auction for materials from its building.

Councilmember Ed Long expressed support for a silent auction, noting that many residents have a sentimental attachment to the historic hotel. He felt that providing an opportunity for community members to obtain a piece of the building would help recognize its significance. Councilmembers Robin O'Driscoll, Randel Mills, and Nick Porter expressed agreement with this approach.

Public Works Director Keith Despain acknowledged that organizing a silent auction would require additional staff time and coordination but felt the opportunity for community involvement would be worthwhile. He noted that staff had consulted with the school district regarding its experience conducting a similar auction and would be prepared to organize the process.

Mr. Bennion cautioned that the City would need to wait until the previous owners completed their contractual salvage period before determining which items would be available to the public. He anticipated that a potential auction would take place in late December or early January, prior to asbestos abatement.

The Council expressed general support for proceeding with a public silent auction of remaining salvageable items. No formal action was taken.

STAFF REPORTS

Assistant City Manager Braeden Christofferson introduced Tiffany Ingalls, the City's Business License Clerk, who was attending the meeting to observe City Recorder Sara Bell and become more familiar with City Council and Planning Commission procedures.

Mayor Corey Foley reported on the recent Vernal Area Chamber of Commerce Dynamites trip, which included visits to Fossil Butte, Garden City, Preston, Idaho, and Lava Hot Springs. He explained that the trip provided opportunities to meet with elected officials, Chamber representatives, and community leaders to discuss challenges, volunteerism, and community development. Mayor Foley expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn from other communities and recognize the resources and facilities available in Vernal. City Manager Quinn Bennion clarified that the trip was funded through participant contributions and Dynamites fundraising efforts rather than Chamber membership dues. Mayor Foley thanked Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll and the organizing committee for their efforts in coordinating the trip.

Mr. Bennion reported on an informational meeting held the previous evening regarding the proposed Aggie Boulevard and Main Street annexation area, extending south to approximately 500 South. He explained that the proposed annexation includes approximately 135 acres and 35 existing homes, along with several other properties. Five residents representing four properties attended the meeting, which lasted approximately two hours and included discussions regarding taxes, water services, and the annexation process. Although the attendees generally remained

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opposed to annexation, Mr. Bennion felt the meeting was productive and helped residents better understand the process.

City Recorder Sara Bell explained that her office had mailed informational packets to affected property owners, including an introductory letter, a map of the proposed annexation area, and an informational packet explaining the annexation process. She noted that the official notices mailed by Uintah County had also been sent to property owners within 300 feet of the proposed annexation boundary, creating some confusion among residents who believed their properties were included because a detailed map had not been included. Ms. Bell explained that the County was sending an additional map to clarify the boundaries and encouraged Councilmembers to direct residents with questions to the Recorder's Office.

Mr. Bennion briefly reported on the upcoming opening of the annual Haunt and noted that attendance at the recent Unhaunt event had exceeded previous years.

Public Works Director Keith Despain provided updates on several ongoing City projects. He reported that geotechnical testing was underway at the Lamplighter Community Block, including soil drilling and percolation testing to assist with site development and stormwater management. He also announced that the City's \$4 million application through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program had advanced through the state-level selection process and would proceed to national consideration. He noted that the property acquisition costs could be applied toward the City's required matching contribution.

Mr. Despain reported that staff continued evaluating proposals for the Police Department's proposed evidence storage building. Interviews were being conducted with the three lowest-cost proposers, and a recommendation would be presented to the Council once the evaluation process was complete.

Regarding the Service Canal Trail, Mr. Despain explained that paving had been completed, although additional finishing work remained. He noted that the pedestrian bridge near 500 North had been delayed by the manufacturer and might not be installed until spring. The remaining portions of the trail could potentially open before the bridge installation, provided appropriate safety measures were implemented. Staff were also coordinating plans for the trail's official naming and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Mr. Despain reported that the xeriscaping project at 500 North and 500 West was approximately 95% complete. The improvements replaced existing grass with drought-tolerant landscaping and drip irrigation to reduce water consumption. He explained that staff intended to monitor water usage to determine the savings achieved and noted that the project qualified for a potential reimbursement of \$1.50 per square foot through the Central Utah Water Conservancy District. Additional City-owned properties were being evaluated for similar improvements.

Mr. Despain explained that the 100 North reconstruction project was nearing completion, with utility collars and remaining sidewalk repairs underway. Street markings, including bicycle lane

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symbols, had also been installed by City crews to reduce project costs. He highlighted the creative efforts of a Streets Department employee who developed a custom dinosaur-themed bicycle lane stencil for the project.

Mr. Despain also provided an update on the 500 South asphalt project. He explained that the contractor, Burdick, was preparing utility access points for milling operations and anticipated beginning asphalt removal the following week, weather permitting. Milling depths would vary between one and two inches to preserve the existing roadway structure, with deeper repairs planned in areas experiencing significant rutting, particularly near Vernal Avenue. Approximately two inches of new asphalt would then be installed. He noted that the contractor would recycle the removed asphalt material.

During discussion, Councilmember Ed Long asked whether staff had calculated the reduction in water loss resulting from the 100 North waterline replacement project. Mr. Despain explained that September water usage information had recently been received and would be compared with water sales data to determine the reduction. He anticipated providing an update during an upcoming Public Works Committee meeting.

Councilmember Randel Mills asked about the progress of the valley-wide sewer system survey. Water Superintendent Ivan Merrell reported that approximately half of the City's survey had been completed, while Ashley Valley's portion was reportedly complete. Mr. Despain emphasized that the completed survey would provide valuable information regarding the condition and capacity of the sewer system throughout the valley.

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Corey Foley stated that there was a need for a closed session. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to go into closed session, to be held in the Jury Room, pursuant to Utah State Code Title 52, Chapter 4, Sections 204 and 205, for the following purposes:

- 1. Discussion of the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual;*
- 2. Strategy sessions to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation;*
- 3. Strategy sessions to discuss the sale of real property, including any form of a water right or water shares*
- 4. Strategy sessions to discuss the purchase, exchange, or lease of real property, including any form of a water right or water shares, or to discuss a proposed development agreement, project proposal, or financing proposal related to the development of land owned by the state or a political subdivision.*

Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

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

ADJOURN: *There being no further business; Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to adjourn. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.*