

1 **M**INUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL AND UINTAH COUNTY  
2 COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 25, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.  
3 in the Vernal City Council room, 374 East Main, Vernal, Utah 84078.

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5 **PRESENT:**

6 **VERNAL CITY:** Councilmembers Dave Everett, Ted Munford, Travis Allan, Bert  
7 Clark and Samantha Scott and Mayor Doug Hammond.

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9 **UINTAH COUNTY:** Commissioners Brad Horrocks, Bart Haslem and Bill Stringer.

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11 **STAFF:** Quinn Bennion, Roxanne Behunin, Cheryl Meier and GJ Searle.

12  
13 **GUESTS:** Kevin Yack, UBAG, Laurie Brummond, UBAG, Bob Abercrombie, Ballard  
14 Mayor, Mike Allred, Board Member UTSSD, Sonja Norton, Dan Dilsaver, Board member  
15 UTSSD, Kurt Mower UBAG, Dean Baker, Naples City Mayor.

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17  
18 **WELCOME:** Mayor Hammond welcomed everyone to this meeting. He asked the audience to  
19 use the microphone if they want to make comments regarding the BTA.

20  
21 **ACKNOWLEDGMENT & APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING:** *Councilmember*  
22 *Samantha Scott moved to acknowledge and approve this special meeting. Councilmember Bert*  
23 *Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioners Horrocks, Haslem and*  
24 *Stringer voting in favor and Councilmembers Everett, Munford, Allan, Clark and Scott voting in*  
25 *favor.*

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27 **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 28, 2019:** *Commissioner Bill Stringer moved*  
28 *to approve the minutes of January 28, 2019. Commissioner Brad Horrocks seconded the motion.*  
29 *The motion passed with Commissioners Horrocks, Haslem and Stringer voting in favor and*  
30 *Councilmembers Everett, Munford, Allan, Clark and Scott voting in favor.*

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32 **BTA SERVICES AND FUNDING IN UINTAH COUNTY:**

33 Mayor Doug Hammond explained that this meeting was to discuss the future of the bus service  
34 (BTA) in Uintah County and Vernal City and the elected officials want to hear from the local  
35 community on this topic. Laurie Brummond, UBAG Director, stated that UBAG is the service  
36 provider for the BTA. She noted that UBAG serves the Tri-County area representing all local  
37 governments. The BTA was initially funded by the Federal DOT and after two years the  
38 funding dropped to an 80% grant from UDOT and 20% local match. The Uintah Basin was one  
39 of four areas receiving this funding and there is a waiting list. The vehicles were purchased  
40 using revitalization funds for the 20% local match. Routes were established with the help of  
41 other transit systems. The red route has a \$1 fare; the other routes do not require a fee. The para  
42 transit system is a one-on-one service which requires residents to apply for services and is the  
43 most expensive to operate. The equipment must be purchased through the State and the largest  
44 service is to the dialysis center. Commissioner Bill Stringer reminded everyone that this issue  
45 has been on the ballot twice to add a ¼ cent sales tax to collect funds for transportation for the  
46 Cities, County and BTA in Uintah County and it was defeated twice. However, unless  
47 something changes in the Legislature, it has been said that the ¼ cent tax will be imposed in

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48 Uintah County in the future and the vote will not stop it. The County Commission has the  
49 option to pass an ordinance before May of 2020 to collect the tax which will ensure that the  
50 funds stay here and be distributed to the Cities, BTA and Uintah County. He stated he did not  
51 know the percentage that would go to the bus system yet, however, it would be a fairly good  
52 amount. If the County does not do this, then the Cities would be offered the same opportunity  
53 and the funds would be split between the Cities and BTA. The bottom line is the ¼ cent tax will  
54 be imposed. If that is the case, the County will consider passing an ordinance and distribute the  
55 funds to BTA, Cities and County. Commissioner Brad Horrocks stated that this tax passed in  
56 Duchesne County and they collected \$780,000 for the first eight months so the tax in Uintah  
57 County could be upwards of \$1 million dollars. Commissioner Stringer stated that the  
58 distribution to BTA will be a greater amount than they are receiving from the Transportation  
59 District. Councilmember Bert Clark asked for a clarification of the difference between collected  
60 tax and funds used by the Special Districts. Commissioner Bill Stringer explained that the  
61 Special Service Districts receive mineral lease money coming to the County which has been as  
62 high as \$36 million dollars a year. The amount collected the last few years has been between  
63 \$12 million dollars and \$13 million dollars. Those funds support fire suppression, higher  
64 education, animal control, health services, recreation services and impact to the community.  
65 Sales tax is collected in the county throughout the year and helps run other government programs  
66 and operations so this extra ¼ cent sales tax will be added increasing the sales tax to 6.45% with  
67 those extra funds going toward transportation. Dean Baker, Naples Mayor, stated that the  
68 question is how to keep BTA up and running during the transitional period when the County or  
69 Cities impose the tax. Cheryl Meier, Uintah Transportation Director, stated that the  
70 Transportation District held a meeting and made the decision to fund the BTA for 90 days and  
71 then revisit that funding once new board members were in place. Mayor Hammond opened the  
72 meeting for public comment.

73  
74 Mr. Bobby Oostveen stated that his commitment to the bus system started during the summer  
75 passport program where one of the requirements was to ride the bus. His family noticed that  
76 people had to sit on the curb or in the dirt and wait so his daughter did not want to ride the stupid  
77 bus. He stated that a goal as a dad is to teach his children the value of giving and create a better  
78 place. He noticed an older gentleman holding a prescription bag waiting for the bus or someone  
79 with an armful of groceries. He decided there was better way to treat patrons of BTA and as a  
80 community there needs to be a clear path to give hope to those that need this service. Quinn  
81 Bennion stated that he has been working with Bobby to install 12 benches at more prominent  
82 stops and donors have come forward to purchase the benches and concrete.

83  
84 Mr. Tim Beavers sated he moved to Vernal last summer and loves the community and bus  
85 system and hopes it is funded through the rest of the year. He asked if there would be any  
86 scaling back of scheduled routes and suggested an annual pass be offered.

87  
88 Mr. Terry Kiever stated that he looked at the information in the hand out and asked for  
89 clarification of the routes. The pamphlet shows 12 loops per day 365 days per year or 5 days  
90 per week. He also asked how the ridership is determined and what criteria is used to determine  
91 when a bus needs to be replaced.

92

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93 Mr. Bruno Wilson stated that he works at the airport and knows the bus system is needed. He  
94 asked UBAG to consider a stop at the airport. Travelers have to walk to find food between flights  
95 and he suggested the red loop be reorganized to help the green loop.  
96

97 Alicia Gowen stated that many students ride the bus to and from school and may not go to school  
98 if they have to walk. From the perspective of an advocate for victim of crime, the location of  
99 the crisis center was chosen to utilize the bus services to help victims and it vital for them to  
100 have this transportation.  
101

102 Cory Hatch Jr. stated that the paratransit bus system has been amazing and is vital to get to  
103 appointments. He stated it is a wonderful service for dialysis, and there is a greater need beyond  
104 that and asked UBAG to consider adding another van because at times it is completely booked  
105 making it hard to get to appointments. The cost for the bus is \$2 where a taxi is a minimum of  
106 \$7 each way making it too expensive.  
107

108 Francis Lewis asked if the services can be expanded to help patrons at the Golden Age Center.  
109

110 Karrie Hoops, manager of the Dialysis Center, stated that approximately 1/3 of their patients  
111 need the paratransit service as they cannot drive. She stated that this service keeps them alive  
112 along with keeping the road safe.  
113

114 Roy McKee stated he is a taxpayer and business owner. The people who were able to drive to  
115 this meeting are lucky to have a car as there are a lot at this meeting who do not have vehicles  
116 and are trying to get back and forth to work. The bus system helps keep vehicles off the road to  
117 improve the air quality which is close to being dangerous. He stated that he wants his kids and  
118 grandkids to grow up here so the bus is important to keep the community together.  
119

120 Mr. Lloyd Dean, taxpayer, asked how everyone got along before 2010 when there was no bus  
121 system. He also wondered what the purpose was of the proposition if there was no value to that  
122 vote. Mr. Dean voiced his frustration that the State Legislature would add a tax when the voters  
123 decided not to. He stated he empathizes with the residents that need the bus, but the calculations  
124 come out to only five people riding per loop so there must be a cheaper way to provide mass  
125 transit. If the sales tax continues to increase it will placed the local market out of line with other  
126 areas.  
127

128 Brenda Jenkins stated that she needs the bus as she cannot drive and asked the elected officials  
129 for their number so she could call them when she needs a ride if the bus goes away.  
130

131 Debra Momley, originally from Roosevelt, stated that she recently lost her home and uses the  
132 bus to get from Vernal to her job. If she cannot ride the bus she will have to give up her job in  
133 Roosevelt. She stated she appreciates everything that has been done for her and how the bus  
134 helps the community.  
135

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136 Aleita Leigh stated that she has a child that is a college student that attends UB Tech and rides  
137 the bus to and from classes. She stated the bus makes her student late for class and asked  
138 UBAG to look at the schedules times to be more rider friendly for the college classes.

139  
140 Valerie Huber stated that she live in Roosevelt and can only ride the bus in the winter because of  
141 the hours of operation. She noted that without the bus, certain things in her life that would not  
142 be going right. If the hours of operation were extended later in the evening it would help those  
143 that do not work a 9 to 5 job.

144  
145 Clarissa Benning, Vernal resident, stated that she works at Northeastern Counseling and many of  
146 their clients desperately need the bus otherwise they have to walk during the winter when it's  
147 cold and dangerous.

148  
149 Sonja Norton stated that the first time this proposition was on the ballot the issue was not clear  
150 and people thought the money would go to other transit systems. She stated that the tax can be  
151 used for not only the transit, but other transportation needs in the County such as trails and  
152 sidewalks. She noted that students ride the bus a lot.

153  
154 Michelle Wheeler, employee of Uintah County library, stated that she does not live too far from  
155 work and used to walk. She had the experience where someone came up behind her which was  
156 scary so now she rides BTA. She stated that she has met a lot of amazing people on the bus and  
157 the drivers are kind and courteous. The paratransit system is also a god-send giving people a  
158 touch of freedom to those that need the service badly.

159  
160 Jordan Mathis, Director of Tri-County Health, stated that it is important to understand all aspects  
161 of the community. In the Uintah Basin as a whole, many residents suffer from poor health  
162 outcomes, some due to social detriments, and often times linked to not having access to things  
163 that help promote health. To increase access those residents need transportation to reach the  
164 food pantry, doctors, Tri-County health, etc. He noted that not everyone rides the bus, but it is  
165 an important aspect of the community.

166  
167 Mayor Doug Hammond thanked everyone for their comments. Laurie Brummond stated that  
168 with the current budget constraints, the schedule has been set for five days a week starting at  
169 5:45 am to 7 pm. She noted that it is enlightening to hear what could determine additional  
170 ridership such as a special route between campuses for students. Initially the transit system was  
171 going to have a hospitality stop for the airport and a Naples City stop. When there was a budget  
172 shortfall those stops did not happen. Two years ago funding was received for more paratransit  
173 vehicles and hope to have one on order soon. Also, Duchesne County and Uintah County  
174 helped purchased a larger bus because of the demand in the morning and after school. The  
175 ridership is counted when someone gets on the bus that counts as one rider. Councilmember  
176 Ted Munford agreed that the tax was voted down twice and he also takes issue with the State  
177 changing the rules. He recommended citizens contact the State Legislature to let them know  
178 how they feel about them implementing this tax. He stated that the State also took funds from  
179 all the Cities and Counties to pay for the homeless shelters on the Wasatch Front. He suggested

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180 citizens become involved. Mayor Hammond thanked everyone for voicing their opinions and  
181 attending the meeting.

182  
183 **ADJOURN:** There being no further business; Councilmember Samantha Scott moved to  
184 adjourn. Commissioner Bill Stringer seconded the motion. The motion passed with a  
185 unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.

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188 \_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Doug Hammond

189 ATTEST:  
190  
191 \_\_\_\_\_  
192 Roxanne Behunin, Deputy Recorder

( S E A L )

AWAITING FORMAL APPROVAL