

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD
APRIL 29, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council room, 374 East Main, Vernal,
Utah 84078.

This will be an electronic meeting with the anchor location being held at the Vernal City Community Room, 374 East Main St, Vernal, Utah. Because of gathering restrictions put in place by the Utah Department of Health, the anchor location will only have nine participants in attendance. The meeting will be streamed live via Facebook live.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Nicholas Porter, Dave Everett, Ted Munford, Travis Allan and Bert Clark and Mayor Doug Hammond.

WELCOME: Mayor Doug Hammond welcomed everyone to the meeting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING: *Councilmember Bert Clark moved to acknowledge and approve this special meeting. Councilmember Nicholas Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Clark, Porter, Everett, Munford and Allen voting in favor.*

APPROVAL OF CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 15, 2020: *Councilmember Ted Munford moved to approve the minutes of April 15, 2020. Councilmember Bert Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Everett, Munford, Allan, Porter and Clark voting in favor.*

FY2020 BUDGET WORKSHOP: Quinn Bennion reminded the Council that this meeting is being streamed on Facebook live due to the directives of the Governor. The next meeting will allow groups up to 20 people so likely it will be a regular meeting. He noted that this year for the budget will be different from any other year due to the pandemic. There is no easy fix for the shortfall in revenue with an estimated drop of 15% with the COVID-19 issues and the oil reduction. Also, the mineral lease funds have been declining and the County is projecting this year around \$5 million dollars which is a \$5 million drop in revenue. Many of the services provided by the Special Service Districts that are funded through the mineral lease payments traditionally are provided by cities and there is an indication that the City may need to fund those services until the mineral lease funds increase. Councilmember Ted Munford stated the City has already been using up reserves so they will have to make tough decisions. Quinn Bennion stated that one positive is the City should receive around \$200,000 for expenses due to COVID-19 and the airport received \$1 million dollars that can be used broadly. Also the new ¼ cent sales tax should start coming in and the CIB has indicated that they may look at deferring bond payments for one year. Quinn indicated that he has come up with a list of ideas to reduce costs, with some of those ideas being very painful for employees. Councilmember Travis Allan stated this is very sobering and asked what would happen next year if the economy does not rebound. Councilmember Dave Everett asked if a partial bond payment could be made. Quinn Bennion stated the City may have to pay on the loans for the streets because the source of some of the funds require that money be used for the streets.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Danny Anderson explained that he is requesting the same budget as last year. He noted that the two vehicles may need tires, and they will watch them closely as the crew realizes the budget is

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bleak. Councilmember Ted Munford asked if there were any areas where he could cut the budget. Danny Anderson stated that a lot of his expenses depends on how harsh the winter is, and possibly he could cut building and grounds expenses by another \$10,000. Councilmember Travis Allan asked how many employees are in this department. Danny Anderson answered there are 4 full-time and one part-time. Mike Davis stated that an employee in this department retired and Danny tried to keep up without replacing him, but they got behind and had to rehire that position. Quinn Bennion stated that last year the custodians left so the City tried, as an experiment, to use a service provider and that had mixed reviews. Danny Anderson stated the City saved very minimal and it did not work out. Councilmember Travis Allan thanked Mr. Anderson for doing a great job. Danny Anderson stated he would go back and see if he could cut more. Quinn Bennion stated that the materials to enclose the planning area will be purchased this budget year to see if it can be reimbursed through the COVID-19 legislation.

PLANNING & ZONING:

Allen Parker explained that travel is a significant component of the budget for the planning department as several of the employees must keep up with training for their certifications. Councilmember Bert Clark asked if the trainings were available on-line. Allen Parker stated that most of the trainings are not offered that way, however, with the current situation that may change. He noted that there are four full-time and one part-time employees in his department. Councilmember Bert Clark asked if any of these employees could do duties outside their job descriptions. Quinn Bennion stated that they can be reassigned or their job descriptions can be updated. Councilmember Dave Everett asked about the Motorpool line item. Allen Parker stated that is the maintenance on the vehicles and he was not sure why it was so high. Councilmember Travis Allan suggested with technology the supervisors make sure the training cannot be taken on-line and if it is not essential for certifications then it not be approved. He asked if the plan review line item could be cut. Quinn Bennion stated this is a pass through item as the developer is charged the cost for the structural analysis. The Council asked Mr. Parker to look over his budget again to see if there were any items that could be cut.

IT

GJ Searle stated that he has been reducing this budget for the past few years and most of the computer equipment was purchased with grant money eight or nine years ago. There is a redundancy built into the system for a backup, but items are starting to fail and need replaced. Councilmember Ted Munford stated he has a line item of \$11,500 for software and asked if there is any way that item can be decreased. GJ Searle stated that is for the email server that needs updated and he is suggesting the email system be moved to Proton. There was some discussion regarding archiving abilities. GJ Searle stated he is worried about performance issues with the current system, however, if the City continues with the same system he can decrease that budget by \$2000. Councilmember Ted Munford recommended the current system be pushed one more year. GJ Searle stated that the main item under replacement parts is the server replacement. The virtual server system is 8 years old. Councilmember Ted Munford asked about the computer replacement program. GJ Searle stated he started a rotation last year and is replacing ten computers each year and that budget has already been reduced. Councilmember Ted Munford

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suggested only five computers be ordered instead of ten and replace once the computer no longer works. GJ Searle stated he can do that and drop that line item to \$4000.

VICTIM ADVOCATES

Cassie Gledhill stated she does not have any changes from last year. This budget is 30% grant funded. Quinn Bennion stated it is closer to 40%. Councilmember Travis Allan asked if the County has their own victim advocate. Cassie Gledhill stated they have one that handles their justice court cases and some 8th District court cases. The City’s victim advocates handle the City justice court cases, all protective orders and all call-outs county-wide. Councilmember Ted Munford asked about their travel budget. Cassie Gledhill stated there are four quarterly trainings put on by the agency that issues the grants. Councilmember Ted Munford asked them to consider cutting the travel down to two trainings. Cassie stated she can cut those line items as well as the uniforms. Quinn Bennion stated he would like to put this on the list of possibly financing as it is hard to delete training for volunteers. Councilmember Dave Everett stated the deduction of \$1600 is not worth the gamble. After further discussion, the consensus was to leave the training budget the same.

POLICE

Chief Dylan Rooks stated that historically the overtime budget is at \$90,000. However, the COVID-19 issues may change that amount as employees are covering shifts for employees who are out on leave. Councilmember Ted Munford stated he hates to push for budget cuts from the public safety department, but some items will need to be reduced without cutting services. Dylan Rooks explained that usually there are 22 certified officers and the school district has agreed to pay a portion of another resource officer which would push the number to 23. He suggested the City remain at 22 officers. There was some discussion regarding the funding from the School District. Dylan Rooks stated with the exception of domestic violence calls, the good thing with COVID-19 is the calls have decreased. The officers were instructed to minimize exposure and not put anyone at risk. He suggested the overtime be dropped to \$60,000 and drop the last position. Quinn Bennion explained that one of the items on his list is to offer some sort of voluntary separation agreement to get employees who are thinking of retiring to consider leaving sooner and taking an incentive. He noted that the County and Naples City are also considering this option. Dylan Rooks stated he may have five or six that could retire. Quinn Bennion explained that there was a heavy push to modify the Tier II retirement coverage through the Legislature and now that increase is being passed on to employees. There is a lot of pressure for the employer to pick up that amount along the Wasatch Front which will make it harder to recruit. Dylan Rooks stated he was not aware he had Tier II officers until the HR office developed a list and the cost. Quinn Bennion stated the cost is approximately \$7000 and he suggested the Council consider it. *Councilmember Nicholas Porter moved to have the City cover the cost of the additional retirement percentage for the Tier II public safety employees. Councilmember Dave Everett seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:*

- Councilmember Allanaye;*
- Councilmember Munford.....aye;*
- Councilmember Clark.....aye;*

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Councilmember Porteraye;
Councilmember Everettaye.

Quinn Bennion stated one item being considered is a unified police service. The Public Safety Committee will look at it and decide if that would be an option for the City.

BUDGET SHORTFALLS:

Quinn Bennion explained that the State of Utah will be receiving \$1.25 billion dollars through the CARES Act and there has been a lot of discussion on how those funds will be distributed. Some of the other items on the list include items such as the untapped fee for natural gas. Each residence pays a franchise fee, however, there could be some large users that have contracts with the gas company that are not paying the fee and that needs to be investigated. There are franchise fees for other utilities also. Councilmember Clark cautioned the staff that some of those entities may change services so they do not pay the fee. Quinn Bennion asked the Council to look over the list and see if they are not interested in any of them. Also, the sponsorship list has been provided for the Council to consider providing funding. Councilmember Travis Allan stated he would rather cut the sponsorships than an employee position. Quinn Bennion stated that the sources and uses of some funding has to be adhered to such as the transient room tax has to be used for specific purposes. Councilmember Bert Clark suggested the City look at having the neighborhood take care of the Robinwood Lane Park. There was some discussion regarding the small areas that are maintained by the ground crew of 8th District Court. Councilmember Travis Allan asked how many employees take care of the flowers. Quinn Bennion stated there are two employees in that department. Councilmember Nicholas Porter noted that the flowers are tied to long term economic development and could reduce tourism if they are not planted. Councilmember Dave Everett stated that the public perception of the flowers is they are necessary and bring people from all over the world to see them. Councilmember Travis Allan questioned whether the flowers are worth an employee’s job. He asked if there are other jobs that the parks employees could do. Quinn Bennion answered that they could be reassigned. Councilmember Ted Munford stated they would need to look at items as non-essential. Mayor Doug Hammond stated another item is the sponsorship of the Chamber of Commerce. Councilmember Bert Clark stated he remembered the former director saying they would reduce the City’s contribution by \$5000 each year. Councilmember Ted Munford agreed that the City funds were to establish a vibrant Chamber of Commerce. If the City pulls out, likely there will not be a Chamber. Quinn Bennion stated the sponsorship was reduced last year. Mayor Hammond stated they do have three employees. Councilmember Travis Allan stated it is tough to lose City employees to save Chamber employees. Quinn Bennion stated the County contributes \$25,000, Naples contributes \$20,000 and the City contributes \$45,000. Councilmember Travis Allan stated that the Chamber is non-essential. He asked about the amount given to the visitor’s center. Quinn Bennion reminded the Council that the City gave them notice last July that they would no longer receive funding for the visitor’s center. Councilmember Allan suggested moving the visitor’s center into the Chamber office. There was some discussion regarding Holly Days. Councilmember Ted Munford stated that it may need to be dropped. Councilmember Travis Allan stated it would not be canceled forever. Councilmember Nicholas Porter stated he would argue Holly Days is essential as one of those

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staple events everyone looks forward to. And the City has to worry about community morale. He noted that it can be scaled back. Quinn Bennion stated that is in the works now with new committee members. There was some discussion on obtaining sponsorships. Councilmember Ted Munford stated the Vernal Excitement events need to be dropped.

DISCUSSION REGARDING RENT RELIEF FOR CITY OWNED BUILDINGS: Quinn Bennion explained that the City rents to three businesses. One is the school that is in the old city hall and the other two are in the building on 100 West. Two of the three businesses have asked for rent relief due to the COVID-19 directives from the Governor. The staff has asked for data from them, however, a better way of doing this with the potential of getting reimbursed through the CARE Act would be to list it as a small business grant. Councilmember Bert Clark asked what other business is asking for a break. Quinn Bennion stated Lone tree acupuncture. He suggested the City invite them to apply for a grant to pay for rent and utilities and then the City can get reimbursed. The consensus of the Council was to allow the grant.

ADJOURN: There being no further business; *Councilmember Ted Munford moved to adjourn. Councilmember Travis Allan seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.*

Mayor Doug Hammond

ATTEST:

Roxanne Behunin, Deputy Recorder

(S E A L)