

**M**INUTES OF THE JOINT VERNAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING AND THE  
UINTAH COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 4, 2014 at  
3:30 p.m. in the Uintah County Commission Conference Room, 147 East Main,  
Vernal, Utah.

**PRESENT:**

Uintah County: Commissioners Mark Raymond, Mike McKee and Darlene Burns.

Vernal City: Councilmembers Samantha Scott, Dave Everett, JoAnn Cowan and Ted Munford and Mayor Sonja Norton.

Naples City: Gordon Kitchen, Dean Baker.

Staff and Guests: Ken Bassett, Roxanne Behunin, Paul Hacking, and Adam Massey.

**WELCOME:** Commissioner Mike McKee welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING:** Commissioner Mark Raymond moved to approve the special meeting. Mayor Sonja Norton seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioners Raymond, McKee & Burns and Councilmembers Scott, Everett, Cowan and Mayor Norton voting in favor. Councilmember Munford was not present for the vote.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 8, 2013:** Mayor Sonja Norton moved to approve the minutes of August 8, 2013. Commissioner Mark Raymond seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioners Raymond, McKee & Burns and Councilmembers Scott, Everett and Mayor Norton voting in favor. Councilmember Cowan abstained and Councilmember Munford was not present for the vote.

**UPDATE FOR UINTAH COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER, POSSIBLE VACATION OF 300 EAST STREET FROM 100 SOUTH TO 200 SOUTH, POSSIBLE VACATION/REROUTE OF 200 SOUTH STREET FROM 200 EAST TO 400 EAST, AND OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE FINANCIAL COMMITMENT:** Commissioner Burns displayed a rendition and site plan of what the new convention center will look like once it is built and explained the layout to the elected officials. She noted that in order to utilize the property for the conference center to the best advantage, it may be necessary to close 300 East Street, and a letter has been submitted to Vernal City to consider vacating that road. The roadway only goes for two-blocks from Main Street to 200 South, and the vacation request is from 100 South to 200 South. Commissioner Raymond stated that the remainder of the buildings on 300 East to 400 East will be demolished soon. Commissioner Burns explained that in order to coordinate between Western Park and the convention center, it may be necessary to either vacate or reroute 200 South Street as well as there will be a lot of shared venues with pedestrians

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walking between the buildings. Ken Bassett stated that the 300 East Street vacation request will be on the next City Council meeting agenda. If the Council decides to move forward with the request, the statutory requirements to vacate the road will take time. Commissioner Burns stated that the hope is to break ground the first part of April so timing is important for this project and asked the City to expedite the request. Councilmember Cowan asked how critical it is to close 200 South Street in front of Western Park for this project. Commissioner McKee answered that it is desirable. Ken Bassett noted that from a public safety standpoint, something will need to be done as a lot of people will be crossing the street.

Commissioner Mike McKee explained that the County solicited proposals for a professional team to manage the conference center, and that contract will be awarded next Monday. The County and Impact Mitigation District have partnered to pay for the construction of the conference center and at the time that the application was submitted to the Community Impact Board for the construction, the City indicated financial support for the operation and maintenance of this project. He asked the Council to consider committing several hundred thousand dollars a year for the operation and maintenance of the center. Councilmember JoAnn Cowan asked what the anticipated operation and maintenance will be on the building. Commissioner McKee answered \$1.2 million dollars, although it is difficult to know exactly what that amount will be. He noted that one of the reasons the center is being placed close to Western Park is to help revitalize downtown. Commissioner Raymond agreed that this is the right location and expressed his excitement about this project. The conference center will be great for the community, but comes at a price. He stated that the County will need help with the operation and maintenance costs and asked the City to consider paying \$700,000. Councilmember Munford stated that the City is in favor of helping; however, part of the issue is not knowing what the actual cost will be. He asked what the projected revenue is to offset the operation costs. Commissioner McKee stated that the deficit is projected to be \$500,000. This is information gathered from the Davis County Conference Center. Commissioner Raymond stated that other conference centers show that the impact to the surrounding area more than makes up for the cost. Mayor Norton stated that although the City is ready to commit, they will need to look at the budget to see if there is any money available. Councilmember Cowan asked what the cost is to run Western Park every year. Commissioner McKee indicated that it is highly supplemented. He noted that although the Western Park is highly utilized, many of the events are not charged a fee which will not happen at the conference center. Councilmember Cowan suggested that a member of the Council also be invited to sit on the management board for the conference center so the City is represented. Ken Bassett noted that there are approximately 140 graveled parking stalls in the northwest corner, and City regulation requires that to be paved. Also, there is a footprint for a hotel. Commissioner Burns stated that there is the potential of a hotel, and they will be responsible for their own parking. There was some discussion regarding the increase in transient room tax being used for the operation and maintenance of the conference center. Councilmember Cowan asked if the conference center and hotel will use the same kitchen. Commissioner Burns stated that is a possibility. Councilmember Munford clarified that the expectations are there will be around a \$500,000 deficit to run the center. Councilmember Cowan suggested the Council consider providing a specific amount of funding for the first two years and then renegotiate based on the success and revenues of the center. Commissioner McKee asked the City to consider the request and get back with them.

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**ELECTRONIC SIGN:** Commissioner Darlene Burns explained that the electronic sign that is on main street, has not been working for quite some time as the power had to be disconnected to tear down the old museum building. She suggested the sign be relocated to a better location. Adam Massey, Chamber of Commerce Director, explained that he contacted Young's Electric Sign to look at that sign to see the condition, and they suggested upgrading the pixels so it can be read easier. Also, a good location would be the island with the welcome to Vernal sign. Councilmember Cowan disagreed. Councilmember Everett asked how close that would be to the T-Rex dinosaur. Adam Massey stated it would be to the east with a roadway in-between. Councilmember Cowan suggested it be closer to the convention center. Mayor Norton noted that there are a lot of distractions for drivers, and this sign adds to that problem. She suggested information be placed on agencies websites. Councilmember Munford stated that it needs to be known who the audience is before spending money to inform the public on this type of media. Adam Massey stated that a central location for the information would be best. Commissioner Burns liked the idea of putting it at the convention center to list what is going on that day. Commissioner McKee asked the elected officials to think about this issue and bring recommendations to the next meeting.

**AIRPORT PROJECT UPDATE:** Commissioner Mark Raymond explained that the engineers for the airport, GDA Engineering, have completed the land acquisitions to expand the airport. Fencing will be placed around the property with proper drainage so construction can begin mid-summer for the new runway. Mayor Dean Baker stated that the engineers have not approached Naples City to discuss fire issues. Councilmember Gordon Kitchen stated that there are also two roads, irrigation issues and right-of-ways that will need to be addressed. Commissioner Mark Raymond stated that he would have the engineers contact Naples City.

Commissioner Mark Raymond explained that the FAA approved a new airline carrier, SkyWest, for Vernal and they will begin flights in March. Unfortunately, the contract with the current carrier, Great Lakes, expired the end of January leaving a gap in airline service into Vernal. Ken Bassett asked if there were any new developments for an airline flight to Denver. Commissioner Mark Raymond explained that a company can charter a flight, but in order to be a carrier that sells "seats", there are stringent certifications that are required. There are local businesses that are working on getting those certifications to restore some service to Denver.

**MEETING SCHEDULE:** The elected officials discussed several dates and times that may work for the next joint City / County meeting. The consensus was to hold the next meeting on Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m. at the Vernal City offices.

**ADJOURN:** There being no further business, Commissioner McKee moved to adjourn. Councilmember Dave Everett seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.

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Ken Bassett, City Recorder