

**M**INUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD  
SEPTEMBER 17, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council room, 374 East Main,  
Vernal, Utah 84078.

**PRESENT:** Councilmembers Dave Everett, Samantha Scott, Ted Everett, JoAnn Cowan and Mayor Sonja Norton. Councilmember Bert Clark was excused.

**WELCOME:** Mayor Norton welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**INVOCATION OR UPLIFTING THOUGHT:** The invocation was given by Councilmember Ted Munford.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Samantha Scott.

**APPROVAL OF CITY COUNCIL MINUTES OF AUGUST 20, 2014:** Councilmember Dave Everett moved to approve the minutes of August 20, 2014. Councilmember Samantha Scott seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Cowan, Everett and Scott voting in favor.

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN POWER PRESENTATION - KATHLEEN HOFFMAN & RICH BUELTE:** Kathleen Hoffman explained that Rocky Mountain Power meets with the Council each year to provide an update on what is happening in the community with the power company. Rich Buelte stated that Rocky Mountain Power has been working on repairing street lights in the area and so far 50 lights have been repaired. Also, the recent fire above Vernal took out 4 structures which caused power outages. The cost to repair the damaged structures was \$750,000. Mayor Norton asked how long the sensors last on the street lights. Rich Buelte answered that they last around two years. Councilmember Cowan asked if they were motion sensitive. Rich Buelte stated they are not; the sensor is just for darkness. However, when a sensor starts to go out, they cycle turning on and off frequently.

Kathy Hoffman explained that the use of solar panels to generate your own energy has been in the news lately. She displayed a YouTube video explaining the electric power grid. Further, she explained that part of the power bill is for the use and maintenance of the power grid and people using solar power need to pay their proportionate share of the maintenance of the grid. Currently that cost is being shifted to non-solar customers. Rocky Mountain Power has also started the Watt smart program to help customers be energy wise. The program includes incentives for customers to choose ways to use less energy which in turn delays the need for more power plants. The Council and Mayor thanked Ms. Hoffman and Mr. Buelte for their report and for Rocky Mountain Power being a part of the community.

**STATE OF UTAH RAIL CORRIDOR PRESENTATION - JOHN THOMAS, UDOT:** Mr. John Thomas, with UDOT, explained that he wanted to update the Council on the Uintah Basin rail project. An extensive study was conducted in 2011 to evaluate the possibility of bringing rail to the Uintah Basin to help with the transportation of energy production as well as other

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products. The initial study estimated this project at over \$30 million dollars. The State Legislature viewed the study and asked UDOT to take another look at it. In 2014, a feasibility study was conducted using new technology to find a more feasible route. Twenty-six different alignments and 4000 miles of alternative routes were studied before deciding on the current route. Mr. Thomas showed the Council an interactive map available on UDOT's website showing the designated route. One of the major components of the selected route going through Duchesne up Indian Canyon, is to stay within designated right-of-ways with the least impact to the environment. The next six months will require UDOT to evaluate ways to come up with the revenue to pay for this project. After that study is completed, the next step will be the Environmental (EIS) process which will include the Federal government as a partner along with the Surface Transportation Board that regulates freight rail in the United States. UDOT, with the support of a six-county coalition will be the applicant to the Surface Transportation Board. Councilmember Cowan asked if the plan is to take the rail over Indian Canyon. Mr. Thomas answered that actually the rail will include eight miles of tunneling through that pass. The route will begin at US Highway 40 and SR 88, down Seep Ridge Road through Ft. Duchesne to Duchesne. The rail will then go through Indian Canyon and turns at the Emma Park Road and connects with that rail line. The exact cost has not been configured yet until after the environmental assessment is completed. Councilmember Everett asked if there were any other tunnels this length. Mr. Thomas stated it has not been done in the US; however, it has been done in Canada and China.

Mr. Thomas asked the Council to look at the website and join the survey with their comments, either positive or negative. Councilmember JoAnn Cowan asked when the last time was that a rail that long was built. Mr. Thomas answered that it has been decades. Councilmember JoAnn Cowan asked if the Ute Tribe is interested and supportive of this project. Mr. Thomas stated that the current route does not impact any tribal lands, however, they have met with the Tribe's Business Committee, and they are interested. Terminals for the rail will be placed near Vernal and Bridgeland with ten trains a day expected to come in and out of the terminals. Councilmember Cowan stated that this is an interesting and creative approach to provide better transportation for the Uintah Basin which will provide more opportunities for economic development. John Thomas stated that the rail does offer unique opportunities for transportation to be able to move large machinery, pipe, building materials, fertilizer etc. at a much lower cost than trucking. The cost to transport pipe, for example, is approximately 3 cents per mile for rail as compared to 20 cents per ton per mile by truck. The initial cost to build the rail is expensive, however there are things that cannot be measured such as how a community will grow with increased manufacturing. The rumor is Vernal is one of the largest cities without access to a railroad. Councilmember Everett asked what the estimated timeframe is for construction. John Thomas answered that the final EIS is not expected for 2 to 3 years. Once that is finalized there could be more delays with lawsuits and permitting which would be another 2 to 3 years. Once that process is finalized, then the construction and engineering will commence. Optimistically, construction could start in six years with construction taking a few more years. Mayor Norton thanked Mr. Thomas for his presentation.

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**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AGREEMENT WITH BUREAU OF RECLAMATION FOR WATER AT RED FLEET – KEN BASSETT & GAWAIN SNOW:** Ken Bassett explained that the the Bureau of Reclamation built Red Fleet Reservoir back in the mid-1970’s to provide recreation as well as drinking and irrigation water. In the early 1980’s, the City subscribed to a 1000 acre feet of Red Fleet water and is still making payments for the purchase of that water. Now the community has grown substantially, and the decision was made to purchase an additional 850 acre feet of Red Fleet water that has not been subscribed to. The Uintah Water Conservancy District along with Vernal City, Ashley Valley Water and Sewer District, Maeser Water District and Jensen Water approached the Community Impact Board to receive help with funding the purchase of additional water shares. The Community Impact Board approved half grant, half loan at 1.5% interest to purchase the water. Mr. Gawain Snow explained that the CIB loan is actually to the Uintah Water Conservancy District so an agreement is needed with the other entities to pay the loan over the next 30 years beginning in 2016. He noted that this is a good investment for future growth. Ken Bassett noted that the City will make this payment each year whether the water is used or not. However, it is critical to have additional water as the area continues to grow. There will need to be an increase to the water users of approximately \$2.50 a month for this additional water cost. Councilmember Cowan asked if the other entities are doing the same thing. Gawain Snow answered yes, although they have purchased different amounts of water. There was some discussion regarding the Ashley Springs Aquifer and what would happen if that were damaged. Ken Bassett assured the Council that the Ashley Springs water is primary and very important to the City. After further discussion, Councilmember JoAnn Cowan moved to approve the agreement with the Uintah Water Conservancy District for Red Fleet water. Councilmember Samantha Scott seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

*Councilmember Munford.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Cowan.....aye.*  
*Councilmember Everett .....aye;*  
*Councilmember Scott.....aye;*

**REVIEW OF BIDS AND REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO AWARD NORTH VERNAL AVENUE WATERLINE PROJECT CONTRACT - KEN BASSETT:** Ken Bassett explained that the bids were opened yesterday for this project and the engineers need more time to review credentials of the low bidders before making a recommendation. He asked the Council to move this item to the next meeting. Councilmember Ted Munford moved to table the North Vernal Avenue waterline project. Councilmember Samantha Scott seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Scott, Everett and Cowan voting in favor.

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AIRPORT PROPERTY RENTAL AGREEMENT WITH ALLSAVE CAR RENTAL - KEN BASSETT:** Kelly Harvey explained that the airport is in the middle of Phase I of the airport expansion which will take approximately three years. The expansion includes the extension of the runways and taxiways which will allow the airport to receive larger aircraft and expand cargo service. Councilmember JoAnn Cowan stated that it will be wonderful to have a car rental service at the airport, and asked why the parking space

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rental is so low. Kelly Harvey explained that they are making up the difference in the office rental as they do not charge for parking to other patrons. Councilmember JoAnn Cowan moved to approve the rental agreement for Allsave Car Rental. Councilmember Dave Everett seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Scott, Everett and Cowan voting in favor.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:**

Halloween Walk:

Councilmember Cowan reminded the Mayor that she has to be in costume for the upcoming Halloween Walk and gave her several suggestions from elementary children.

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

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Mayor Sonja Norton

ATTEST:

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Roxanne Behunin, Deputy Recorder

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