

**M**INUTES OF THE JOINT VERNAL CITY AND UINTAH COUNTY  
COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 19, 2016 AT 3:30  
P.M. IN THE UINTAH COUNTY CONFERENCE ROOM, 147 EAST MAIN,  
VERNAL, UTAH.

**PRESENT:**

**UINTAH COUNTY:** Commissioners Bill Stringer and Mike McKee. Commissioner Mark Raymond was excused.

**VERNAL CITY:** Councilmembers Ted Munford, Samantha Scott, Dave Everett, Travis Allan, Bert Clark, and Mayor Sonja Norton.

**GUESTS:** Mayor Dean Baker. Adam Massey, Stan Gordon, Laurie Brummond, Steve Evans, Brad Horrocks, Kevin Yack, Joel Brown, .

**STAFF:** Ken Bassett, Roxanne Behunin.

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

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING:** Mayor Sonja Norton moved to approve and acknowledge this meeting. Councilmember Samantha Scott seconded the motion. Commissioners Stringer and McKee and Councilmembers, Munford, Scott, Allan, and Everett voted in favor for a majority vote. Councilmember Clark was not present for the vote.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 22, 2016:** Councilmember Dave Everett moved to approve the minutes of August 22, 2016. Councilmember Ted Munford seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

**BASIN TRANSIT AUTHORITY:** Laurie Brummond, Director for the Uintah Basin Association of Governments, explained that the Basin Transit System is currently being paid for by a grant with the matching funds coming from Duchesne County and Uintah County through the Uintah Transportation District. Duchesne County contributes funds for 1 ½ route and Uintah County pays the same. She displayed the different routes. The red route covers the Vernal City loop, while the green route is mostly in Duchesne County connecting to the red route. The Vernal loop has the most riders, meeting up with the bus coming from Duchesne County so those patrons can switch buses to get to needed services. One of the biggest reason riders use the bus from Duchesne County to Vernal is to shop and utilize other services around the City. The Uintah County Commission expressed concerns with the cost, so the UBAG staff looked at the budget to see where cuts could be made. The dispatchers have been reduced to part-time, and one staff position that was vacated has not been filled. One crucial item is that eventually new buses will be needed which will reduce the maintenance costs. Ms. Brummond handed out a tentative budget showing grant funds of \$364,480. The cost to the County's is \$190,000 each which has been whittled down from \$230,000. There are special events such as Holly Days and the Paddle fest that also utilize the buses. Commissioner Mike McKee stated he understood there is a contract that requires the County to continue the bus from Duchesne to Vernal.

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However, the focus is on the red route which loops around Vernal City. Laurie Brummond stated that the cost to continue that route is \$90,000. Councilmember Ted Munford asked if this is all the expenses for that loop. Kevin Yack (?), from UBAG, answered yes. Adam Massey stated that the transit system is funded through the Uintah Transportation District at least through the end of the year. He stated they are looking for partners to continue this bus route. Commissioner McKee stated that Commissioner Raymond is on the Board for the Uintah Transportation District and has indicated he would support the District continuing to support the BTA if Vernal City would pay ½ of the cost. Councilmember Ted Munford asked for the formula on how the cost for the Vernal loop was derived. Laurie Brummond stated they will have to do an exact calculation for the City. She stated that when the BTA was formed they initially had less stops to Vernal. They received complaints so they added more stops. The Vernal loop now takes 45 minutes to circle the City. It is easy to add more stops, but more difficult to discontinue as they are dealing with civil right issues. Also, the para-transit component requires the bus driver to pick up disabled residents if they live within ¾ mile of any stop. Some of those patrons live in Uintah County and some are in Vernal City. Councilmember Dave Everett asked if it were imperative that the Vernal loop be free of charge. Laurie Brummond answered no. Commissioner McKee explained that there is really no incentive to charge the riders as any fees collected go to the end of the grant. If no fees come in, the grant is renewed immediately. Laurie Brummond stated when the transit system started, several public hearings were held. UDOT agreed to fund the transit system as this helps get vehicles off the roads and no matching funds were necessary. Over time, UBAG began working with the Ute Tribe, the homeless shelter and women's crisis center to provide transportation. Now matching funds are required, and the fares paid by patrons cannot be used to offset the matching funds. Mayor Norton asked if anyone approached the businesses that are benefitting from the transit system to see if they would contribute. Laurie Brummond stated some of them have assisted with benches or advertise on the side of the bus. Mayor Norton asked about the School District or Terra Academy. Laurie Brummond stated she did meet with Terra Academy to see how they could accommodate the students riding the bus. Brad Horrocks asked how many students are riding the BTA bus. Kevin Yack stated he could get specific numbers. Councilmember Ted Munford stated he was there when this program was first started, and it was discussed at that time how to pay for it if the grant disappeared. It was indicated at that time that the Transportation District would handle it. Also, the community voted no to Proposition 1 that would have funded this program. The voters in Duchesne County approved the tax so they do not have the same issue paying for the transit system. He stated in his opinion, the voice of the community is sacred. Commissioner Bill Stringer stated that the Special Service Districts are facing budget issues with mineral lease funds being drastically reduced so they are looking at ways to cut expenses. Also, the Transportation District is not supposed to spend money inside the City limits. He noted that the Commission will also have to prioritize mineral lease spending starting with legal requirements such as animal control and fire services. He agreed with Councilmember Munford that it is hard to fund the bus system when the Uintah County voters did not approve the tax. The cost for the Vernal loop is \$90,000 and without a partnership with the City, it will be hard to fund that program. He asked if there is a way to cut the cost possibly by not offering as many trips. Laurie Brummond stated they would need time to complete a study to see what services could be cut. Commissioner Stringer stated they have set up a meeting with the Special Service District to divide the mineral lease money. Those funds were in the \$30 million dollar range and now are down to \$9 million so the Districts will be facing

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difficult decisions. Commissioner McKee stated the route from Duchesne County to Vernal will continue as that is under contract. The Vernal loop will be based on the decision of Vernal City. Adam Massey reminded the City that they own 25% of the airport and are not paying any funds for the airport anymore. He suggested the City pay a portion of the BTA to continue that service to the community as they are the ones benefitting. Further, the transit system is good for economic growth and Naples City is also asking for a bus stop. He asked the elected officials to keep in mind the big picture for future planning as the community needs a transit system. Mayor Norton explained that the City signed an agreement with Uintah County to shift funds from the airport to the conference center. Adam Massey stated he was not aware of that agreement. Mayor Norton suggested the City Council get with the finance director and see if there are any funds available that could be used for the BTA. Councilmember Bert Clark asked if the County would be contributing any funds from their general fund. Commissioner Mike McKee stated they do not have any extra funding and their responsibilities are to the unincorporated areas of the County. He noted that the County lost over \$1 billion dollars in valuation last year so they have to cut budgets. Brad Horrocks asked high on the priority list of essential services is the transit system? Commissioner McKee stated for riders it is essential. He stated that his recollection when this program was presented to UBAG one reason it was supported was air quality. Laurie Brummond stated one way of reducing the cost was to have UBAG absorb the administrative cost. Further, she noted that the green route does stop at a few locations in Vernal City. If the number of trips per day are decreased, that may drop the cost another \$10,000. Kevin Yack explained that with the federal funding, the transit system must help the population within a certain poverty level as well as offer the para-transit system. He noted that if the Vernal loop is discontinued, that will drop the UDOT funding and they will not get it back. Commissioner McKee acknowledged that the main bus coming from Duchesne County to Uintah County is necessary and that route will continue. Laurie Brummond explained that the federal funding has to be applied for four years in advance. There are only a few transit districts in the State with other areas waiting to receive funding. Studies are completed every six months to see what is happening with the passengers and where the service will be most beneficial. The latest survey shows patrons are using the bus to travel to work, shop, get to doctor appointments etc. Commissioner McKee stated that UDOT has committed to stay on a 50/50 split for funding the transit system. He asked the Vernal City Council to review their budget and see if they, along with the Transportation District, can pay for the Vernal loop. Councilmember Clark asked UBAG to provide data on what time of day is the busiest for the Vernal loop. Laurie Brummond stated they can provide a monthly count. Councilmember Ted Munford stated he would like more accurate information to help make a decision.

Shanna Wheeler, resident, stated her daughter uses the para-transit system, and asked if this will be a Band-Aid fix to try to keep the bus going for a little while until the economy improves or this issue is placed on the ballot again. Commissioner McKee explained how the tax would be split if it is approved by the voters.

Steve Evans asked how much the UDOT funding will be reduced if the Vernal loop is eliminated Laurie Brummond stated that whatever can no longer be matched. Kevin Yack stated the Vernal loop is \$90,000 so it will be that amount plus the administrative cost capital funding.

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**AIRPORT UPDATE:** Commissioner Mike McKee explained that the FAA awarded funding for the airport in the amount of \$16 million dollars to finish the runway project. Adam Massey stated they need to sign the grant by 3 pm tomorrow.

**NEXT MEETING;**

After discussion, the consensus was to hold the next meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm at the City offices.

**ADJOURN:**

There being no further business, Councilmember Bert Clark moved to adjourn. Commissioner Mike McKee seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.

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Kenneth L Bassett, City Recorder