

MINUTES OF THE JOINT VERNAL CITY COUNCIL AND UTAH COUNTY COMMISSION, SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON MAY 11, 2015 AT 3:30 P.M. IN THE VERNAL CITY CONFERENCE ROOM AT 374 EAST MAIN ST, VERNAL, UTAH.

PRESENT:

Uintah County: Commissioners Bill Stringer and Mike McKee. Commissioner Mark Raymond was excused.

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

Staff and Guests: Ken Bassett – Vernal City Manager, Steve Evans and Jessica Bowden – Chamber of Commerce, Josh Bake and Dean Baker - Naples City, Mike Davis and Roxanne Behunin - Vernal City.

WELCOME: Councilmember JoAnn Cowan welcomed everyone to the meeting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING: *Councilmember Bert Clark moved to approve the special meeting of May 11, 2015. Commissioner Bill Stringer seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioners Stringer & McKee and Councilmembers Everett, Scott, Clark and Cowan voting in favor. Mayor Norton was not present for the vote.*

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 3, 2015: *Councilmember Bert Clark moved to approve the minutes of February 3, 2015. Commissioner Bill Stringer seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioners Stringer & McKee and Councilmembers Everett, Scott, Clark and Cowan voting in favor. Mayor Norton was not present for the vote.*

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AGREEMENT - STEVE EVANS: Steve Evans, representing the Vernal Area Chamber of Commerce, explained that the Chamber of Commerce is actively working with all businesses to help the economy in the Vernal area. He noted that the Chamber would not be able to provide the services that it does to the business community without the contributions from the City and the County. Mr. Evans presented a slide show outlining all the items that the Chamber is involved with. This year the Chamber will be even more involved with events such as the 4th of July Parade and Trees for Charity. Presentations are made every week to provide tools and resources to retail merchants as well as industrial, and oil and gas industry companies. The former director, Adam Massey, was the Chair of the State Chamber representing Vernal on the Wasatch Front. Further, Mr. Evans explained that the Chamber is the first stop for visitor information and handles 30 to 40 requests per day during the summer months. Specific committees have been set up to handle legislative impact, public relations, health fair, conservation, higher education and the Dinah Mites who are the good will ambassadors. The financial picture for the Chamber is steadily going up with revenue of \$79,000 for 2010 to \$120,000 this year. The membership has increased from 150 to 300, and the hope is that these businesses are seeing the benefit of belonging to the Chamber. Commissioner McKee noted that a few years ago it was difficult to keep a director because no benefits were offered, and the wage was too low. The City and County stepped in to help fund the Chamber

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with the goal of becoming self-sustaining. Steve Evans stated that the contract with the City and the County expired in 2012 and needs to be renewed. He stated that a new contract will be forwarded to Vernal City and Uintah County for consideration. *Commissioner Mike McKee moved to support the Chamber of Commerce with final approval of the agreement to be done once the final document is presented with all the details outlined. Councilmember JoAnn Cowan seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioners Stringer & McKee and Councilmembers Everett, Scott, Clark and Cowan and Mayor Norton voting in favor.*

Josh Bake, Naples City Manager, expressed his interest in having a presentation made to Naples City to see if they were interested in being involved in the Chamber again. Commissioner Stringer commended the Chamber on getting so much done with a small budget.

PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVE - COMMISSIONER MCKEE: Commissioner Mike McKee explained that the public lands initiative that is being presented to the Legislature will help resolve several land disputes with the Bureau of Land Management. Approximately every 10 to 15 years the BLM updates their resource management plan, and the County created an energy zone for the BLM to also consider when they update this plan. Most of the land in Uintah County managed by the BLM is critical for recreation, preservation, or oil and gas extraction. This public land initiative will also resolve outstanding legal issues, set boundaries for red rock wilderness, revise the current lawsuit, and direct the BLM to withdraw proposals for the master leasing plan. Commissioner Stringer stated this initiative will also designate B & D roads. Commissioner McKee stated the hope is to transfer 1000 acres of land to Uintah County around Ashley Springs to protect the water utility corridor. There has also been discussion of changing the Dinosaur National Monument to a National Park. If this is accomplished, there will be some protections under the Antiquities Act. Further, Commissioner McKee noted that the BLM land in Uintah County is dotted with State Institutional Trust Lands, and the hope is to transfer that BLM land, changing it to State Trust Land. Commissioner Stringer stated that the land transfer will include other counties with the land in Uintah County to make it more accessible for development which is quite an economic opportunity. Councilmember Clark expressed his appreciation for the time and effort put into this project. Commissioner Stringer stated there are several counties wanting to join this effort, and if they have a good proposal, it is being worked into the plan. There will be one more meeting before finalizing the proposal which includes recreation, grazers, and road use. Mayor Norton thanked the Commission for the update.

“SLOW THE FLOW” CAMPAIGN - KEN BASSETT: Mayor Norton explained that this will be a tough year dealing with water shortages. The City will use a conservation effort first, and then move toward restrictions if necessary. Ken Bassett stated that even during times when culinary water is available, the community has to deal with the irrigators suffering from water shortages. A meeting has been scheduled for April 27th with all the water providers in the Valley to push conservation measures for both outside watering and and inside use. The City will be working with the Division of Water Resources to initiate the “Slow the Flow Campaign” with funding from Central Utah Water. Commissioner McKee noted this is a wise approach to educate the community to not be wasteful.

AIR SERVICE IN MAY - COMMISSIONER MCKEE: Commissioner McKee explained that Sky West Airlines has elected to discontinue their air service to Vernal. The FAA bid out

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the air service and chose Great Lakes as the new carrier. Unfortunately, there will be a gap between services even though the FAA put pressure on Great Lakes to provide service now. The latest information is they will begin service in early June to mid-June. Councilmember Cowan asked if this is a two-year contract with Great Lakes. Commissioner McKee answered yes, although there is an opt-out clause. Commissioner McKee explained that Sky West is changing the type of planes in their fleet, but the FAA would not allow the jets to use the airport until the airport is upgraded. Commissioner Stringer stated an exception was requested which the FAA denied. He hoped Sky West will bid in the future once the airport is expanded.

AIRPORT INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT: Commissioner Mike McKee notified the elected officials that the County Attorney and Uintah Special Transportation District are working on the Interlocal Agreement to transfer the airport to the District. Once the final draft has been reviewed by all the attorneys it will be presented to the City.

TRUCK ROUTE: Commissioner Mike McKee explained that he had a discussion with the Mayor on how this route will affect Vernal City, and how the County can zone the area along the route so it does not compromise other businesses. The Community Impact Board approved approximately a \$15 million dollar funding package with the District furnishing a \$4 million dollar cash match for the initial start for the truck route on the east end, but there is an issue with the sage grouse. Councilmember Clark asked where the route will start. Commissioner Bill Stringer answered it will start by the Split Mountain Truck Stop approximately 6500 South going west. The County bought property for better access on 2500 South, but there is no support to have the route that far north. He stated that the concern with this project is the cost of over \$80 million dollars. Commissioner Stringer suggested a new study be completed to see if the number of heavy trucks still supports the need for this roadway and reevaluate updated data. Commissioner McKee stated the County may need to change the priority to connecting to I-70 to help tourism. Councilmember Cowan agreed that connecting to I-70 will benefit the area. Commissioner Stringer stated that the area can capitalize on the advertising for the parks in Utah by tying Dinosaur National Monument into that, but a good through highway is needed to get people here. Naples City Mayor Dean Baker expressed his concern that the truck route still be a priority to get the heavy trucks away from downtown. He stated that the CIB funds are produced here and should be used to help the impact from the oil and gas industry. Commissioner McKee noted they are not abandoning that project, simply looking at more current information. Mayor Baker stated possibly the design should be scaled back with the number 1 priority being the truck route then pursue the road to Grand County. Ken Bassett asked how much funding has been set aside by the CIB for the truck route. Commissioner McKee stated phase I was \$16 million dollars with another \$4 million from the Transportation District. Mayor Norton thanked the Commissioners for the update.

CONVENTION CENTER UPDATE: Commissioner Stringer reminded the Council that the County ended their association with Western States, and instead has asked the manager of Western Park to also manage the convention center. The vision for the use of the center has changed to more of a “community center” that is affordable for local businesses to use. There is a lot of interest, locally, to use the facility. Councilmember Clark asked if local caterers will be used. Commissioner Stringer answered yes. Mayor Norton noted the conference center will be able to accommodate larger events. Commissioner Stringer agreed and stated there have been

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conflicts, especially in the winter months, when the equestrians use the indoor arena, and the conference center will alleviate that issue. The Commissioners invited the Council and staff to tour the conference center on Friday at 10:00 am.

TRANSPORTATION TAX: Commissioner Mike McKee explained that he has received a report from Basin Transit Association with UBAG and they are also interested in the transportation tax to fund this program. He explained that a portion of the tax would go to the cities, a portion to the transit authority, and the remainder to the County, if it is passed. Mayor Norton asked if UBAG can attend the next meeting to give a report on the busing system.

MEETING SCHEDULE: After discussion, the consensus of the elected officials was to schedule this joint City - County meeting on the third Monday of each month starting at 3:30 p.m.

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

Ken Bassett, City Recorder