

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD
JANUARY 20, 2021 at 5:30 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. Those in attendance will be required to wear a mask unless they are speaking. Because of gathering restrictions put in place by Governor Cox, the anchor location will only have ten participants in attendance. The meeting will be streamed live via Facebook and broadcast on the Vernal City YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvGzca67KY_BIQwmNfNyzEQ

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

ACKNOWLEDGMENT & APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING: *Councilmember Bert Clark moved to acknowledge and approve this special meeting. Councilmember Dave Everett seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Clark, Everett, Munford and Porter voting in favor for a unanimous vote.*

DISCUSSION ABOUT WATER CONSERVANCY EFFORTS AND WATER BANKING: Quinn Bennion introduced Mr. Tyler Dow, co-founder of WetX who will explain how they can help the City with water conservation efforts and water banking.

Mr. Dow explained that they formed their company once they realized the way water is looked at is broken and they could create technology to fix the problems. WetX stands for Water Exchange and Transfer and they would like to help the City better utilize their water resource. First, he stated that the City is not utilizing the waste water and it could end up being reallocated to Colorado. The acre foot needs to be valued and treated as a commodity. Second, this area need to manage the water better especially during a drought. He asked the Council to think of the value of water similar to manufacturers who purchase water by the ounce, foot or barrel. The water is a renewable asset that should be inventoried so good decisions can be made on how to best use the asset. Mr. Dow explained that his company takes the water documents the City has, digitizes them, looks at the infrastructure and then analyses what is available. Aaron Averett, with Sunrise Engineering, explained that the sewer line data was collected back in 2009. A map was created showing all the lines, manholes and joint lines so the sewer entities could manage that system.

Ryan Goodrich, with Ashley Valley Water and Sewer Improvement District, stated that they use this map and software for billings, service orders etc. so they can make informed decisions on growth or funding needs. Councilmember Bert Clark stated it is important to have all the entities using this type of system to determine areas of growth and the impact of that growth. Ryan Goodrich stated they also use the water map software to help with historical data for spring runoff, scheduling, usages such as during high temperatures, or heavy rain so the treatment plant can make informed decisions. Mr. Goodrich stated this information also helps reconcile the funds at the end of the year showing the water that was treated and then sold. If the water can be tracked more often, problems can be found quicker and repaired or corrected.

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William Merkley, director of the Uintah Water Conservancy District, stated they have three areas of concern where they can provide service. One is the water development on the Green River, including water rights to take care of growth and make sure those rights are secured, the infrastructures necessary to manage the demands from municipalities, and federal contracts on how the water is used. There is some latitude so if there is excess water from one company, it can be measured and transferred with a secure transaction. Right now it is not known if there is excess water and it is hard to react to the needs of the community. There are several organizations who are water right holders on Ashley Creek which is monitored to make sure the water goes where it needs to go. However, because there are so few individuals who understand the complexity of water rights, the District sees the benefit of working with WetX to help increase accountability. Tyler Down explained the cost for Phase 1 and 2 is \$25,000 and the goal with implementation is to have the staff use it daily.

Quinn Bennion noted the City needs a better understanding of what water rights are available and what is running down the Creek. The hope is to categorize this, understand the usage during different times of the year so the City is in a better position to lease some of the water.

Tyler Dow explained that the recent constitutional amendment allows entities to buy and sell water to each other. So if the City has an excess amount of water and Ashley Valley would like to lease it, they pay a reservation fee. This would require the creation of a water bank. The bank would have members such as irrigators, oil companies and municipalities. Some of the members would use their water shares as collateral to finance infrastructure, technology or develop resources. The water bank would cost around \$350,000 to set up. There was some discussion on the best approach to set up a water bank. Councilmember Ted Munford acknowledged that the end goal is the bank and asked where the \$350,000 start up cost would come from. Tyler Dow stated it would come from the three entities, Vernal City, Ashley Valley Water and Sewer, and WetX as the technology platform. Ryan Goodrich stated that Uintah Water Conservancy District would also have to be involved.

Dan Matthews, with WetX, explained this is like a regular bank with members sometimes making deposits while others borrow. Gawain Snow stated he sees these entities as the founding members of the water bank. Councilmember Dave Everett stated it would be better to start on the ground floor. Quinn Bennion stated the City possibly could fund this with the water that would be leased.

ADJOURN: *Councilmember Ted Munford moved to adjourn. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Porter, Everett and Clark voting in favor for a unanimous vote.*

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Mayor Doug Hammond

ATTEST:

Roxanne Behunin, Deputy Recorder

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