

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD MARCH 17, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council room, 374 East Main, Vernal, Utah 84078.

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

WELCOME: Mayor Doug Hammond welcomed everyone to the meeting.

INVOCATION OR UPLIFTING THOUGHT: An uplifting thought was given by Councilmember Nicholas Porter.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Dave Everett.

APPROVAL OF CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 3, 2021: *Councilmember Dave Everett moved to approve the minutes of March 3, 2021. Councilmember Bert Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Everett, Munford, Allan, Porter and Clark voting in favor.*

INTRODUCTION OF NEW ASHLEY REGIONAL HOSPITAL CEO – WES TAYLOR: Mr. Wes Taylor, new CEO of Ashley Regional Medical Center, introduced Board Members, Dr. Thomas Buchanan and Ken Bassett. He then presented a slide show of his life, talked about his family and what brought him to Vernal. He noted that the team he is working with here is incredible and amazing especially during this pandemic. He then gave highlights of how the hospital began in Vernal and where it is now. Councilmember Bert Clark stated he remembers rolling down those hills at the hospital when he was young. Wes Taylor stated there are other major clinics in small towns such as the Mayor Clinic and this hospital has been transformed into a true regional primary hospital. The hope is to be able to provide more services so patients do not have to transfer out of the Basin for care. Also, this hospital has been recognized the last 5 years as being in the top 5% of rural hospital in the country. The hospital has paid just under \$2 million dollars in taxes that supports the schools and other local governments. They also have a fund to help with charity care which is not small dollars. What this means is the hospital provides care to patients with no insurance and who cannot pay, yet need care. He noted that AVRMC also provides funding for events and needs in the community. With COVID, the staff is continually working on updating procedures such as visitor restrictions, surge plan and PPE. He explained that his interest in healthcare comes from his family history where one family member received care and one did not and it makes all the difference. Mayor Doug Hammond welcomed him to Vernal. Councilmember Dave Everett expressed his appreciation for his presentation and welcomed him. Councilmember Bert Clark noted that he has a good Board and good staff.

PRESENTATION AND UPDATE BY STRATA NETWORKS – TYLER RASMUSSEN: Tyler Rasmussen, Dave Ryan, and Todd Massey from Strata Networks were present to address the Council. Mr. Rasmussen stated that Strata provides technology to the Uintah Basin and presented the latest projects for the area. He explained that the company understands the need for connectivity to provide distance education, working from home and talking with family. At the end of 2020 they had 9550 locations and plan on adding at least 1000 more per year. What that means is the Uintah Basin is receiving fiber service and networking at the same level that is being provided in large cities with the best broadband technology in the world. Tyler presented a slide show for the 13 projects planned for 2021 with 6 additional zones. He presented a map of the Ashley Valley showing areas that already have fiber and the coaxial layer for their service. He stated that fiber will be added to areas like Air Village, Rock Point, 4000 South, 1500 West, Richardson subdivision, north Vernal Avenue and downtown. As a coop company they do what they can to deliver service affordably and hope the consumers understand the savings compared to companies like UTOPIA. Quinn Bennion asked if this rate schedule applies to residential.

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Tyler Rasmussen answered yes, that the commercial rates are different starting at \$275 a month. He stated the average residential cost is \$80 a month which is the same price in Neola or Vernal. Last year the USDA representatives come out to a remote ranch in Whiterocks and they selected Strata for a \$3.6 million dollar loan/grant program to provide services to remote areas. The environmental reviews are underway so they can start construction. Strata has applied for more funding for 1500 additional locations, and that decision on that funding should be awarded soon. There are other areas of the State that also received funding and Strata crews are helping get conduit in the ground in areas like Tremonton, Cove Fort and Salina. He noted there is a lot of interest and inquiries to use the crews in other areas now that they know they have the expertise to do the work. There has also been inquiries from other cities to provide service which is generating additional opportunities for the company. Todd Massey indicated that they have signed a five year contract with Providence to provide fiber and maintain it. Dave Ryan noted that the federal funds are not just intended for specific zones and can be used in other areas to recover those funds. Tyler Rasmussen stated that because of growth and foresight, Strata has been able to grow, provide stable employment and provide a wonderful and necessary service. He stated they have partnered with the City and other members in the Innovation Hub and they appreciate that partnership. The Mayor and Council thanked Mr. Rasmussen for the report.

REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR THE 4TH OF JULY FREEDOM FEST – SAMANTHA SCOTT: Samantha Scott, Board member for Freedom Fest, reminded the Council this is a new event that was started last year. There were some difficult challenges with COVID and they learned a lot from that experience. This year the plan is to have food trucks, vendors, a live band and fireworks. There are also more community members involved. The live music will be provided by Yeager Town and the fireworks show will be larger than last year which increases the cost to \$15,000. There will be a slightly different location for the fireworks putting them more centralized over the ballfields this time. She asked the Council to consider sponsoring this event in the amount of \$3000 for the fireworks and \$1000 for the event. Councilmember Ted Munford asked if this event was budgeted. Quinn Bennion answered yes, in the amounts being requested. *Councilmember Ted Munford moved to approve the funding for Freedom Fest and the fireworks as budgeted. Councilmember Travis Allan seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:*

- Councilmember Munford.....aye;*
- Councilmember Allanaye;*
- Councilmember Everettaye;*
- Councilmember Porteraye;*
- Councilmember Clark..... aye.*

REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR THE DINOSAUR ROUND-UP RODEO – MIKE KARREN & CARSON YOUNG: Mike Karren stated that he wanted to follow up on the presentation that was made over a month ago to request sponsorship funds for the Dinosaur Round-up Rodeo. He explained they met with Councilmember Travis Allan and Quinn Bennion who helped them with the business strategies to promote this event. Carson Young stated that out of the brainstorming session came the idea to customize the sponsorship package for the City by changing the name to Vernal’s Dinosaur Roundup Rodeo, add more advertising highlighting Vernal, add arena banners, and redo the logo. There was some discussion regarding the banners and the placement of the banners. Councilmember Travis Allan stated he was pleased with the discussion and their willingness to work with the City. He noted that last year the rodeo was the highlight of the summer with everything being closed down and he was proud to say this was Vernal’s rodeo. The request is for \$17,000 and with the changes and willingness to partner and show the City is involved, *Councilmember Travis Allan moved to approve the sponsorship in the amount of \$17,000 for Vernal’s Dinosaur Roundup Rodeo. Councilmember Nicholas Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:*

- Councilmember Munford.....aye;*
- Councilmember Allanaye;*

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Councilmember Everettaye;
Councilmember Porteraye;
Councilmember Clark.....aye.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF AMENDED INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH UINTAH COUNTY FOR COURT SERVICES AMENDING RESOLUTION NO. 2020-16 – RESOLUTION NO. 2021-06:

Quinn Bennion explained that this item is an amendment to the Interlocal Agreement (ILA) with the County for court services. The City submitted the original ILA to the Administrative Offices of the Courts and they questioned the ability of the County to dissolve their court with just an agreement. This amended agreement removes one section where Uintah County acknowledged Judge Petry will be paid for her remaining term even though the court will be dissolved. He noted that the justice courts are subsidized by their local entities and operated by them, but has heavy oversight by the State so the City needs to work with them on this merger. The main reason for this merger of the courts is to find efficiencies and save taxpayer dollars. Mayor Doug Hammond stated the County also needs to approve an amendment before this request goes back to the State. Councilmember Ted Munford stated that it makes sense to combine to lower costs. *Councilmember Ted Munford moved to approve the amended ILA, Resolution No. 2021-06. Councilmember Dave Everett seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:*

Councilmember Munford.....aye;
Councilmember Allanaye;
Councilmember Everettaye;
Councilmember Porteraye;
Councilmember Clark.....aye.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF A WATER BROKER AGREEMENT WITH WETX:

Quinn Bennion reminded the Council of the work session held with WetX to discuss the possibility of initiated Phase 1 and 2 to better understand what water rights the City has. The first phase will include the scanning of water records so they can be more familiar with how the water is being used. It is believed that the City has water that is not being used, which can be used for growth or drought years and the possibility of leasing it out. This water broker agreement facilitates those leases. Councilmember Ted Munford stated this is the reason why he is in favor of partnering with WetX in the hope of solving these issues. Quinn Bennion agreed it would be beneficial for the Red Fleet water as well as the water that is going down Ashley Creek. Councilmember Ted Munford clarified that when the City uses water from Red Fleet, it is not the City’s obligation. Quinn Bennion agreed. Councilmember Bert Clark asked if there is an opportunity to lease the water to the State or other federal agencies with the critical state of the drought and dispute over water with the tribe. Quinn Bennion stated he did not know the answer and possibly WetX can find out. He noted that the number one goal is to provide safe water to the businesses and residents of the community. *Councilmember Dave Everett moved to approve the Water Broker Agreement with WetX as presented. Councilmember Travis Allan seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:*

Councilmember Munford.....aye;
Councilmember Allanaye;
Councilmember Everettaye;
Councilmember Porteraye;
Councilmember Clark.....aye.

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF A GRANT AWARD AGREEMENT WITH UDOT FOR THE SAFE SIDEWALK PROJECT ON 500 WEST FROM 300 NORTH TO 400 NORTH:

Quinn Bennion reported that the City received funding from UDOT through their Safe Sidewalk Grant to install sidewalk to the walking park and that project is now under construction. The next phase is to complete the sidewalk on 500 West from 300

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North to 400 North and the City has also received a grant for that project through the Safe Sidewalk Grant. The remainder of the sidewalk has to be completed by the developer who is building the Uintah Basin Clinic. This project is from the edge of that property going south a little more than a block on 500 West. There is a 25% match and this project is fairly expensive due to the elevation and grading. The City’s share is estimated at \$29,600 which is not in the budget so it will need to be added to the reopener with the funds coming from the transportation tax. Councilmember Travis Allan asked if the property owners would incur any expense. Quinn Bennion answered no. Councilmember Bert Clark asked who would do the inspection. Quinn Bennion stated the engineering firm will do an inspection as well as the City inspector. *Councilmember Bert Clark moved to approve the grant agreement from UDOT for phase II of the Safe Sidewalk project. Councilmember Nicholas Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:*

- Councilmember Munford.....aye;*
- Councilmember Allanaye;*
- Councilmember Everettaye;*
- Councilmember Porteraye;*
- Councilmember Clark.....aye.*

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AGREEMENT WITH UINTAH COUNTY FOR ELECTION SERVICES: Quinn Bennion reminded the Council that the City does have an election this year for two Councilmembers and the Mayor. State law requires the election to be held by mail and the City could chose to do the election in house or contract with the County. Roxanne Behunin stated she has conducted an election by mail in the past and prefers to have the County handle it. Quinn Bennion stated the County would be performing this service for other entities and the cost to the City is approximately \$10,000. If a primary is needed it will be an additional cost. Councilmember Travis Allan asked why a primary would be necessary. Quinn Bennion answered that if there are more than 2 candidates for Mayor or more than 4 candidates for Council a primary would be necessary. *Councilmember Travis Allan moved to approve the agreement with Uintah County for election services. Councilmember Ted Munford seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:*

- Councilmember Munford.....aye;*
- Councilmember Allanaye;*
- Councilmember Everettaye;*
- Councilmember Porteraye;*
- Councilmember Clark.....aye.*

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Bird Scooters:

Quinn Bennion announced that the scooters arrived today and have been placed strategically around the City. To use the scooters you need to download the app and pay a \$1 activation fee and a per minute use fee. There is a local operator and the company will pull the data to see the most popular spots to ride. He encouraged everyone to ride and be safe.

Downtown plan

Quinn Bennion stated that the architect, MTHN, have scheduled focus interviews with the Council to get their input on the downtown plan. Councilmember Dave Everett stated he has already been interviewed and it went great and they want to hear all the ideas.

Recycling Bins:

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Councilmember Bert Clark asked if the recycling bins are out in the community. Quinn Bennion stated he had not been consulted on moving them and would check to see where they are.

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

Mayor Doug Hammond

ATTEST:

Roxanne Behunin, Deputy Recorder

(S E A L)