

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD
MAY 10, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Planning conference room, 374 East
Main, Vernal, Utah 84078.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Nicholas Porter, Robin O’Driscoll, Ted Munford, Dave Everett, and Corey Foley and Mayor Doug Hammond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING: Councilmember Robin O’Driscoll moved to acknowledge and approve this special meeting. Councilmember Corey Foley seconded the motion. The motion passed with the Councilmembers O’Driscoll, Foley, Porter, Everett and Munford voting in favor for a unanimous vote.

ALIVE AFTER FIVE FUNDING REQUEST – STEVE EVANS: Steve Evans expressed his appreciation for the 25-year partnership with Vernal City for the Alive after Five event that has evolved from Cobblerock Park to Western Park and now the park by the library. He highlighted the various activities and contests held during the event, along with the funding application and flyer for this year. Councilmember Ted Munford expressed his support, while Mr. Evans emphasized the need for shade and a better stage to further enhance the event's growth. He also mentioned the positive impact the event has on downtown commerce and community engagement. Mr. Evans shared stories of personal development and the event's promotional benefits for Vernal City. Despite the event's annual financial loss, Mr. Evans recommended funding, noting recent marketing initiatives like purchasing Roosevelt stations and partnering with Basin Now. The council members, including Councilmember Dave Everett, commended the event's organization and selection of judges. The budget request for the event was \$2500. Councilmember Corey Foley moved to approve the funding of \$2500. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded it. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Munford.....aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll.....aye;
Councilmember Everettaye;
Councilmember Porteraye;
Councilmember Foley.....aye.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF REAL ESTATE PURCHASE CONTRACT – QUINN BENNION: Quinn Bennion provided an update on a real estate purchase contract regarding a parking lot adjacent to the hub. Councilmember Ted expressed appreciation for Quinn's efforts, while Councilmember Nick Porter inquired about the closing date, which Quinn stated would be at the end of the month. Quinn mentioned that the proposed funded amount would allow collaboration with neighbors, and highlighted that the parking lot served as a City asset. *Councilmember Ted Munford moved to accept the counter offer and proceed with the purchase. Councilmember Dave Everett seconded. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:*

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Councilmember Munford.....aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll.....aye;
Councilmember Everettaye;
Councilmember Porteraye;
Councilmember Foley.....aye.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH AVENUE CONSULTANTS: Quinn Bennion, City Manager, explained the purpose of the agreement, which pertained to the SS4A grant. He mentioned that the City did not receive it last year; however, there is a better chance this time. He highlighted the requirement of having a safety plan and shared that those who received the grant previously had not yet completed their projects. The grant amount would be in the range of \$3 million dollars instead of the previous \$4.8 million. The cost of hiring consultants for assistance with the grant process was estimated at \$24,000. Councilmember Ted Munford inquired about the odds of receiving the grant. Keith Despain responded that last year was the first year of the grant, and planning grants were mandated to receive 40% of the funding, while implementation grants ranged from \$10 million to \$50 million. He stated that the City's project was not large, and this year the focus seems to be on smaller projects under \$10 million, which puts the City in a more favorable position. Quinn Bennion acknowledged that Avenue Consultants had extensive experience in this process and were among the first to go through it. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll questioned the cost of \$24,000 for a chance at securing a \$3 million grant, and Councilmember Nicholas Porter highlighted the importance of investing in infrastructure like pipes in the ground. After further discussion, Councilmember Nick Porter made a motion to approve the agreement with Avenue Consultants for a cost of \$23,940. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Munford.....aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll.....aye;
Councilmember Everettaye;
Councilmember Porteraye;
Councilmember Foley.....aye.

FY2024 BUDGET WORKSHOP INCLUDING GENERAL FUND, WATER FUND, SEWER FUND, AND SOLID WASTE FUND, MUNICIPAL BUILDING AUTHORITY FUND, STRIKE FORCE FUND, AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS FUNDS AND PROJECTS IN THE CITY AND ALL SALARY AND WAGE SCHEDULES:

GENERAL FUND:

Administration Budget:

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Quinn Bennion proposed changes to the administrative budget. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll raised the topic of professional services, and City Manager Bennion introduced the idea of implementing a monthly texting service to City Hall.. Councilmember Nick Porter proposed establishing a dedicated emergency line. Mayor Doug Hammond cautioned against eliminating the texting service due to its perceived benefits by the community. The cost of the service was discussed, with City Manager Bennion stating it would amount to \$3,000 per year. City Manager Bennion presented the idea of including CDL training in the budget. The discussion then shifted to the purchase of a Sharp copier/printer through a state contract, which City Manager Bennion proposed as a cost-effective option.

Mayor and Council sponsorships:

The Council then discussed contributions and fundraising events. Councilmember Foley expressed concern over the high costs and the need to carefully evaluate the return on investment. Councilmember Porter pointed out the break-even point for hotel rooms and proposed reducing the rodeo budget to \$17,000. Councilmember Dave Everett suggested increasing the budget by \$500 to enhance the event. City Manager Bennion proposed including Alive after Five as part of the River Festival. Various miscellaneous events were also discussed, including Rock the Ride and the Energy Summit. Councilmember Nick Porter suggested categorizing certain and allocating funds accordingly. Councilmember Foley highlighted the attendance and impact of the rodeo, while Mayor Hammond mentioned the positive effects of events like the Mayor's Walk and the Raceway.

Cobble Rock Park:

Quinn Bennion shared the decisions made in collaboration with BHI, including the use of colored concrete. He explained the approach of following the storm drainage ordinance for new developments and the use of underground infrastructure in certain areas. The possibility of incorporating walkways and concrete strips was discussed, with Councilmember Foley expressing his support for a better visual appeal. The project will also include the cost to replace worn-out archways in the park. The use of flower pots in place of rectangular planter boxes was proposed to save \$20,000. The Council discussed the inclusion of raised flower beds, seat walls, and electrical outlets in the patio area. Councilmember Foley suggested painting utility boxes and improving snow removal strategies.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

School Resource Officers (SROs): Quinn Bennion outlined that the cost to the City budget for an SROs which is partially reimbursed by the School District. Dylan Rooks explained that if they came up with \$86,000 per officer from the School District based on number of school days. He proposed three SROs and seeking reimbursement. The Council agreed that this was a good place

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to start. Councilmember Corey Foley stated that Terra Academy is also interested in having an SRO and would have to contribute to the cost.

Code Enforcement:

Quinn Bennion explained he spoke with the current code enforcement employee who suggested focusing on hiring a seasonal summer code enforcement employee who would report to her. He noted the cost to hire a seasonal employee is very reasonable. The Council agreed that would be a reasonable approach. Councilmember Corey Foley suggested that certain issues, such as cars parked inappropriately, fell under the jurisdiction of the Police Department and need extra attention. Quinn Bennion proposed having an attorney on staff to issue a summons in some cases will eliminate the need for citations. There was some discussion regarding softening the letters that are being sent to residents on code enforcement.

Administrative Assistant Position:

Dylan Rooks requested the addition of an administrative assistant position, as it was previously cut in 2020. He explained the need for a receptionist clerk and records clerk due to increased workloads and legislative mandates. The State is requiring a notary for records management and mandating expungements that have to be cataloged. The Council agreed that the position was necessary and should be filled.

Court Clerk Position:

Quinn Bennion stated that the court clerk position changing from part-time to full-time will cost approximately \$8000.

Airport Tech:

Quinn Bennion stated that the new airport tech position being requested will not affect the City budget as much as the County budget.

Attorney and Legal Assistant:

Quinn Bennion noted that the City will be able to hire a city attorney and legal assistant using the agreements with other agencies. Councilmember Ted Munford stated he is onboard with this change to hire an attorney.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS:

Quinn Bennion presented a breakdown of the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) and the sources of funds. Mayor Hammond expressed his satisfaction with the \$250,000 Showalter abatement, which would be offset by property sales. The Council discussed various grant-funded projects and the need to address road conditions. Quinn Bennion mentioned that the Trails Committee would present a request from for 15% of the ¼ cent transportation tax toward trails every year. Councilmember Ted Munford stated he would be hesitant to commit until they show a specific project for the funds. Councilmember Nick Porter questioned where the funds are being spent

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now. Quinn Bennion answered the funds go to the airport and downtown although it has to show transportation related projects. He stated that other items to be aware of is the funds for early debt payment which will be used for other items.

Salary Considerations:

Quinn Bennion provided a historical perspective on salaries, referencing data from 2014 onwards. He proposed a heavy focus on merit-based increases, with no separate cost-of-living adjustments (COLA).. Quinn Bennion explained that the average evaluation rating for last year was 3.7 and if the employee received a percentage based on that number, it could be a 1, 1.5 or 2 equaling 3.7%, 5.55% or 7.4%. Councilmember Ted Munford asked what he recommends. Quinn Bennion stated the County gave a \$2 raise which equals a 7.9% raise and Naples City is giving a 3%. He suggested the City go with a 2 multiplier based on the evaluation rating. The Council discussed different options, including a one-time cost adjustment and a COLA tied to inflation. Carl Morton suggested the Council go with a 1.5 multiplier salary increase and a .5 multiplier one-time payment. Councilmember Nick Porter stated that retention is an important component that needs to be considered. Dylan Rooks stated that the police department ended up way behind on wages when the salaries were not increased for a few years and it hurt retention and recruitment. He agreed with rewarding employees for performance. After further discussion, the Council agreed to further analyze the proposals and revisit the topic at a future meeting.

Holidays:

Quinn Bennion clarified that the staff is not pushing or promoting Juneteenth, however, the majority of cities and the State have adopted that holiday. Some entities are simply honoring all State holidays. Roxanne Behunin pointed out that it would add Columbus Day, Juneteenth and eliminate the day after Thanksgiving.

Quinn explained that going with Juneteenth would avoid facing criticism, as they would still face backlash even if a floating holiday were granted. Councilmember Corey Foley expressed his support for recognizing Juneteenth this year. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll emphasized the importance of not revoking any existing holidays. Councilmember Dave Everett proposed postponing the decision for a year. Councilmember Ted Munford acknowledged that eventually, the City would have to address this matter.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, Councilmember Nick Porter moved to adjourn. Councilmember Dave Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was declared adjourned.

Mayor Doug Hammond

ATTEST:

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Roxanne Behunin, City Recorder

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