

**MINUTES** of the work session of the Uintah County Commission held **April 8, 2024** in the large Commission Conference Room of the Uintah County Building at 152 East 100 North, Vernal, Utah. Meeting commenced at 9:02 a.m.

**PARTICIPANTS:** Commissioners John Laursen, Brad Horrocks, and Sonja Norton.

**ATTENDANCE:** Mike Wilkins, JC Brewer, Willis LeFevre, Jon Stearmer, Matt Cazier, Scott Hardman, Wendi Long, Deanna Nyberg, Rick May, Crystal Clark, Barbara Simper, Zeke Atwood, Becky Richards, Derrick Jaramillo, and Lance Dean.  
Minutes recorded by Tai Duncan.

**WELCOME:** Commissioner Laursen welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. BACKHOE LOADER LEASE AGREEMENT WITH WHEELER** – Scott Hardman, Road Department, indicated this is actually an annual rental agreement not a lease agreement and is presented each year for approval. The cost is \$14,000 for a 430 Backhoe. Mike Wilkins, Clerk-Auditor, wanted to make sure this was the best value possible; he thought there may be other entities such as water districts that rent out their backhoes. Scott replied many are moving away from annual rental agreements and do five-year lease agreements instead. The lease agreement, lease to purchase, they do have is for a 420 for Buckskin Hills. Zeke Atwood, Purchasing & Grants, has not seen the rental come through his office yet. Barbara Simper, Assessor, clarified the eight pieces of equipment to abate from personal property are the graders not the backhoe. Scott confirmed she was correct. He added this is the best price he knows of for such equipment.

**1. DISCUSSION RELATED TO THE FUNCTION and POSSIBLE COMBINATION** of the Library Board, Historical Preservation Board, and the Uintah County Heritage Museum Advisory Board.

Commissioner Norton noted they have spoken with the Attorney's office regarding this consolidation with the attempt to be more efficient. She turned the discussion over to Jon Stearmer, Deputy County Attorney, to explain. The Library Board is a creature of state statute; they have defined responsibilities and limitations. It would be cumbersome and complicated to combine the Library Board with the others so he would recommend leaving the Library Board as is and combine the other two. The Historical Preservation Board and Heritage Museum Board are both just advisory boards. The Library Board also has plenty of applicants to fill vacant seats whereas the other two do not. Combining the two would help with that issue; it is easier to fill 7 seats as opposed to 14. Commissioner Norton felt it would be best to discuss the idea with the boards before taking it to Commission meeting. Jon added, when they are ready, his office will combine the two ordinances to make a new one for consideration and the two existing can then be repealed.

**4. REQUESTING A DONATION to Utah Chapter of Public Lands Council** to cover Public Lands Council Fees – Matt Cazier, Community Development. Richie Anderson was also available to answer questions.

Matt noted the Public Lands Council, PLC, is a national organization that advocates on behalf of farmers and ranchers who use public lands for their operations. The Utah Chapter is asking for \$1000 to help pay the state dues in the amount of \$25,000. Richie added the PLC has been in place a long time with a fully-staffed office in Washington DC. Utah has been a member for a long time but the fees had been paid by the Utah Department of Agriculture, UDAF, from the fees paid for grazing allotments. An audit recently stated they can't do that. In turn, each rancher has been asked to pay \$100 for each allotment to help cover the \$25,000. It is a 501-C3 nonprofit organization. They lobby for the protection of grazing rights on public lands as well as all other multiple uses such as recreation and oil and gas. If the County could contribute \$1000, the County would be a non-voting member. They are looking for any kind of financial assistance. The PLC is a good resource on public lands issues. Mike expressed concern with providing a donation. If the State audit indicated they can't pay the fee, those restrictions would most likely apply to the County as well. Jon agreed. This is similar to the County's payment to the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is required to put together a packet of information showing the tax revenue

from the various events and programs that the County sponsors to show the benefit to the County. Richie then asked if it could be a membership rather than a donation. Jon responded that is an option if it is appropriate for the governmental entity to be a member and they would have to fully explain what a non-voting member is. The County is part of a lot of other quasi-governmental entities such as UAC, Utah Association of Counties. All the details would need to be considered to determine the best action to take. Mike noted a check in the amount of \$2000 was paid to Public Lands Council in April 2023. This was a payment to the National Council but does not help the Utah Chapter pay their fees. They would also like to research this Council compared to the UAC Public Lands project. Richie added the Utah Chapter is important to public land users because many were not aware of the PLC resources available when the fees were paid by UDAF. They are better organized this year. The County will look into this and see what can be done.

### **3. PUBLIC DEFENDER CONTRACT for DISTRICT COURT – Becky Richards, Public Defender Office**

Lance Dean, Public Defender, was able to attend. On March 22, 2024 his office terminated the District Court Contract with Tyler Ayers. Jon helped them with the precise language for the termination effective the end of March. Ayers will be paid thru March. Lance worked with Zeke and Commissioner Laursen regarding hiring a new attorney to begin April 1 so as not to have a lapse in services. Aaron Owens applied in December when Ayers was hired. As per the professional services and emergency procurement policy, they can hire Owens to start right away. His contract will go thru December 31<sup>st</sup> to complete Ayers' contract along with the usual provision that it can be extended for two additional terms. The contract can be signed tomorrow and the monthly fee is \$9,166 per month.

**5. 2024 UEN Wi-Fi for LIBRARIES project plan, budget application, and MOU – Ryan Mattson, IT**  
Sam Passey left this for Ryan to complete when he left the County. It is a grant reimbursement; we make the purchase and UEN, Utah Education Network, will reimburse the County. It allows for Wi-Fi access points at the Library, the Regional History Center, and the Heritage Museum. The application has been reviewed and approved by UEN. There are places in the Library on both floors. There will be one outside at the Library as well as the Museum to provide service for the Library plaza area and the park. Strata has a hotspot in the restroom at the park but Ryan has been told it is difficult to connect to. We do not want to compete with Strata but we do want to provide access to the public in these public areas that have many different events. The agreement with UEN states we understand the guidelines and questions and will follow our own purchasing policy. The application was approved for \$34,858.15. They were very specific and required quotes in the application process. \$4,362.13 of this amount would be for help from Spectra in running cables; the IT department does not have enough time to get it all done.

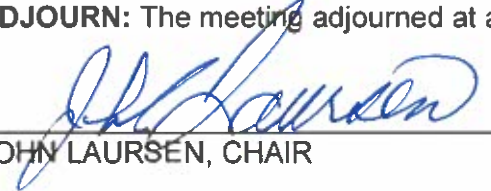
The only requirement that is a little odd is UEN wants their inventory tag on all equipment. The access points are less than \$1000 and would not require a County inventory tag whereas the switches are over that amount and will need both inventory tags. It's not a concern, the County owns the equipment. UEN simply wants to know when equipment is in service and when replaced. The licensing is for five years and the equipment should last seven years. This is a one time grant opportunity through UEN utilizing ARPA Funds. The points inside the buildings are part of the regular replacement schedule and budgeted as needed. The outside points are around \$2,200 each, with the five-year licensing. We don't have to stick to the exact application but we cannot exceed it. In response to Zeke's question, they didn't specify auditing requirements but they did ask for the Library's federal ID number. Mike noted we would be a sub recipient of a federal funding recipient. Zeke noted it would most likely require federal reporting so Ryan will get the information to him to track. Commissioner Horrocks asked if there is an agreement with Strata regarding their hotspot. Ryan is not aware of anything. They were simply allowed to put a hotspot there.

#### **Comments:**

JC Brewer took a moment to ask about the public lands input. He was a part of the Public Lands Advisory Committee for many years, years ago. He wanted to know how all public lands users, not just farmers and ranchers, could stay connected and get their comments heard as well. Commissioner Norton noted there is a public lands meeting each month with public lands partners. Matt noted Community

Development takes comments from the public and users and gets them to the appropriate entity depending on the topic or proposal. Anyone is welcome to contact Community Development with comments. Willis LeFevre also reminded JC that Richie had mentioned the Utah Chapter will address more than grazing issues – they intend to be advocates for all multiple use topics.

**ADJOURN:** The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:39 am.

  
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JOHN LAURSEN, CHAIR

  
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MICHAEL W. WILKINS, CLERK – AUDITOR

