



## CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

### Mayor Logan Monson

Mayor Pro Tempore Cheryl Bowers  
Council Member Chris Ewald  
Council Member Charlie Taylor  
Council Member Erik Grover  
Council Member Kellen Nielson

January 23, 2024 at 7:00pm

50 West 100 South Street,  
Blanding Utah 84511

**Please email Trent Herring,  
therring@blanding.city, if you would like  
the link to attend live.**

### Staff Members in Attendance:

City Manager - Trent Herring  
City Engineer -  
City Finance Director - James Francom  
Judge-

City Community Dev. Dir. -  
Economic Dev. Dir. -  
Police Chief-  
Fire Chief - Corey Spillman  
Recreation Dir. - David Palmer

Others: Bruce & Patty Lyman, Elain Gizzler,  
Michael Garlid (virtual)

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## POLICY MEETING

- I. Call to Order at 7pm
- II. Roll Call
- III. Prayer or Thought - Prayer was offered by council member Ewald
- IV. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.
- V. Approval: Consent Agenda

**Council member Taylor made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Council member Ewald seconded the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Bowers Monson repeated the motion and asked for questions or discussion. Hearing none, she called for a vote.**

**Those voting Aye:                      Councilmember Ewald  
   Councilmember Taylor  
   Councilmember Nielson  
   Councilmember Grover**

**Those voting Nay:                      None**

**Constituting all members thereof, Mayor Pro Tem Bowers declared the motion carried.**

- VI. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest - None

### Public Input

Anyone wishing to address the Council on any item is invited to do so. - None



## Reports

### 1. Financial Report - James Francom

- James stated that the check register is available to review. He wonders if there may be better reports that might be more valuable for them in the future and he also wonders if it would be better for him to only make a report every other meeting.
- Council member Grover asked if a design has been decided on for the boat ramp project. James stated that it is passed through funds and we get reimbursed for it. Councilmember Grover stated that we have paid Jones and DeMille for the design and he wanted to know the status of the project. Trent stated that Blanding isn't necessarily involved in that project but he did get a design from Jones and DeMille, but it's not yet final. He will have that available for the council at the next meeting.
- Council member Grover also asked why we are paying the state of Utah \$7,100 for the courts. Council member Taylor said that he asked James about it and to his understanding when there is a citation or a court hearing and someone pays their fee, that money is passed on to the court for their fees and surcharges. So it is money that we collect from offenders that pay their fees and we pass it through to the state.
- Mayor Pro Tem Bowers said that regarding the report, she likes that it keeps them updated on spending and she likes the detail.
- The council and James had a discussion on whether or not he will report every meeting or just once a month and what that would look like either way. They discussed the benefit of both ways and how that would impact the work James has to do.
- Trent stated that It would be the same report, just less frequent and a benefit to that; is they would be able to look back at a month and see the expenses better.
- The council agreed to try it monthly and if they decided to change back to twice a month, then they will.
- Mayor Pro Tem Bowers stated that the quarterly reports are critical in making sure they are meeting the expectations of the budget and they can see a comparison to where they were last year as well.

### 2. Fire Report - Corey Spillman

- Corey stated that he thought it was time to give a report for 2023. His report was included in the council's packets, he had some stats including how many they have staffed, how much training they did, how many calls they went on and what those calls were. In 2022 they went on 37 fire calls and in 2023 they had 85. He said that there are a lot of fire alarm calls, a lot of them are coming from UNHS, the hospital and the college. He said that a lot of them are false alarms. He will meet with the college's state fire marshal and see if there is something they can do to remedy the false alarms. He said that 99% of the calls they get from the college are from the dorm area where they have a microwave and people are burning popcorn or something similar. He also said the same thing happens in the women's shelter. He said something that would help is to change the smoke



detector to a heat detector.

- Trent Said that when he worked at the hospital he tried to get it changed to where if the alarm went off it didn't call dispatch first but that wasn't allowed. It's an automatic call out system and it calls dispatch and then dispatch calls the hospital and the hospital employee tries to be quick about letting them know if it's a false alarm, but dispatch is very fast and efficient.
- Corey said that they did an enormous amount of training hours. Council member Grover asked if the hours were spread out evenly between the 14 active members. Corey stated that some do more than others. Councilmember Taylor asked what the minimum training hours are. Corey stated that they don't have a bare minimum. They discussed if that could be a liability. Council member Tylor also asked if he feels like there are enough active members. He said there are 14 and he would like to have at least 20. Council member Taylor asked how he recruits. Corey stated that it is mostly word of mouth. Councilmember Taylor suggested amping up the recruiting by putting it out on social media, the city web page, and running it in the paper. Corey said that an issue they run into with applicants is them not having a current driver license.
- Council member Bowers asked why he chose the number 20. She feels like that's a lot. Corey explained that on a house fire 20 people still aren't enough. and because they are volunteers they are employed in other jobs and have families and other things, so not everyone can drop and go on a call. Although, he did say that if he puts out a second alarm, he usually can get 90% of his guys to show up to help. Corey said that they get paid when they get called out and for training. Council member Taylor said that he would like to help him out and try to get him more active members. They discussed people living outside the jurisdiction and how that's not feasible or safe.
- Corey said that the fire academy has a different program that they are offering. They send a person down every other week to instruct them on the fire 1 and 2 curriculum. They do a 4 hour class on any of the state skills that they want to learn. It's free of charge. It helps in the process of getting the guys certified. He said they have been doing it since May and it's been incredible. They did hazmat awareness training and did the testing for it. Most of the time it's a 3-month process but they will stretch it out and get it done in about 2 years.
- Council member Taylor aske how many instructors he has on his staff. Corey said that anyone that is fire one and two certified considers themselves instructors.
- Council member Bowers asked if he ever reaches out to his inactive members. He said he does and they say they want to be there, but then they never show up. Council member Taylor suggested that they find a balance in what is required to stay active.

### 3. Economic Development EDVS 2023 - Trent Herring (Ben Mulhstein)

- Trent went over Ben's economic report that was included in the packet. It states:
- The Visitor Center Tracks visitation and spending over the year as one way to track overall visitation to the city. Here are a few highlights of what we saw over 2023:
  - We saw our highest visitation numbers this year since 2018 (28,388) This is



significant considering our slower than average Spring visitation.

- Two months saw record income. (August and November)

- Overall Income is lower than 2022, but higher than 2021 which follows statewide trends in visitation and visitor spending. Total for the year \$55,556.50

Our advertisements this past year really took off and we exceeded past benchmarks. Here are a few key notes:

- Blanding tourism related ads were viewed more than 8.7 Million times this past year.

- Our ads received over 110,000 clicks and the Visit Blanding Website saw a 200% increase in site sessions over 2022.

- Council member Grover asked if there are any economic development projects in the works. The group discussed pickleball, the 4th of July, walking and biking trails.
- Council member Taylor asked about the dollar amount on the report. He wanted to know if the \$55,556,50 is what we spent. Trent stated that is our income, council member Taylor asked if it's after expenses. Trent believes that is income from the visitor center. Council member Taylor is curious about what our expenses are. Trent said that we can bring the report back next month and get it clear up with Ben.
- Council member Bowers was also wondering what is being done to bring business to Blanding. She wonders if Ben is visiting businesses, trying to help them. More than events, is there more that can be done to help current businesses.

## Business Items

1. None

## Discussion Items

1. Wellness Center Sprinkler & Bathroom Project - David Palmer & Trent Herring
  - David said that he did the walk through and they found that the approach to the handicap showers are 50% over what they are supposed to be. So the project is still going. They had to pull up the floor to redo it. They discussed who is responsible for the mistake and who will pay for it. David said that he isn't sure who is responsible. And Trent assured the council that we won't be paying for the mistake. David said that they are having a hard time getting the tile guys to come back to do more work.
  - Council member Taylor said that he has been asked when the bathrooms are going to be done by citizens. He suggested that a temporary wall or sorts be put in to block the area that is still being worked on, but leaving access to some toilets. David said that he would look into that.
  - Council member Ewald asked if he had a rough timeline to get the punch list done. David said that the mistake will take the longest, everything else is close to being done.
  - Trent said that a big item on the punch list is the schedule 40 to schedule 10



pipng on the sprinkler system. He said that they haven't heard back from the contractor on that yet. They discussed whether it will be replaced or if we'll get reimbursed for it. Trent's recommendation is to take a reimbursement for it. There is a \$250/a day penalty that goes against the general contractor for not having the project done.

## 2. Wellness Center Rates - David Palmer

- David said that this isn't something that is taken lightly by him or the facility. But the increase in costs across the board has to be passed on to the consumer and it's time to do that. He said that the recommendation from his city staff is included in the packet. He said that their plan is to do an increase over a two year period.
- Council member Ewald asked if they did some comparisons with other facilities. David said that yes they did and we are under what everyone else is and have been for a long time.
- Council member Bowers stated that it would be helpful to her to see a report of revenue now and expected revenue and why we need to raise costs.
- James stated that he looked at revenue and expenses and we are covering about 50% of expenses that we receive from revenue. So the idea of increasing daily rates will increase revenue from those who are visiting.
- David stated that family passes are purchased by citizens and local people and the daily passes are purchased by visitors or those that are passing through.
- Council member Grover asked if there is a breakdown of those who buy daily passes versus those who use the family passes. David said that that information is always in his monthly report.
- Council member Taylor asked about maybe getting an efficiency study and seeing when the busiest time is and if we are open to people coming in and renting it from us and not affect our overall membership. He said that the weight room is overrun and maybe we could open at 5am instead of 6am. David said that we open at 5:30am and close at 10pm.
- David said that the wellness center has averaged over 1600 annual memberships, which is almost half the population of Blanding. In business, those numbers are phenomenal.
- Council member Taylor stated that he has heard it's overrun by college students, he asked about catering to accelerated groups that need practice facilities. David said that they accommodate anyone that approaches them and asks.
- There was a general discussion about usage and the times that people are using the facility. They also discussed the college and how the passes and classes work for them and who pays for it. They discussed possible fees for classes that are taught by someone not employed by the facility.
- Trent stated that the college pays for the students' passes and they also cover half the cost of the security employee. He said that there are about 20-25 college students that have passes right now.
- They discussed the size of the facility and how it was apparent that we are undersized for the amount of use it gets and that was apparent in the beginning. It was stated that we did what we could with what we had. There was discussion of expanding the building. Increased fees will bring in more revenue for that to



happen. The building was built with expansion in mind, out the east side. They discussed drawing people in during the “off hours.” They discussed accommodating the city rec teams as well as other programs and teams.

- Council member Bowers wants this brought up in their capital projects discussion. She stated that we need to share the costs more to the users than to the taxpayers.
3. Elaine Gizzler - San Juan County ED
- Elaine with the San Juan County Economic Development and visitors services wanted to give an update on economic development. She said that the San Juan county commissioners, a year ago this month, have signed a resolution in support of economic development and “San Juan County is open for business.” She said that the Commissioners have been very supportive in her efforts to move things forward and bring more revenue into the county.
  - Elaine stated that 2021 Zions bank did a sales tax leakage report and the estimated sales tax loss for San Juan County was \$94 million. And it’s because we are missing some of the key largest businesses that bring in sales taxes, which are, motor vehicle and parts sales, general merchandise stores, food services and drinking places, building material, equipment and supplies, Clothing and clothing accessories stores, furniture and home furnishing stores, electronics and appliance stores. She said she is working on bringing more businesses to San Juan County.
  - She said we have a robust economic development website. She said they are working on a relocation packet. She hopes to talk to companies and bring their business to San Juan County. She said that one thing she is concerned about is that Goulding’s Lodge is being sold to the Navajo Nation at the end of February and San Juan County will lose hundreds of thousands of dollars in transient room tax. She said that if it goes into the Navajo Nation we won’t be able to collect the TRT.
  - Council member Taylor stated that even if the Navajo Nations buys the property the land is still private. Elaine stated that they are buying the land and the business. Council member Taylor stated that they can’t change the reservation boundary, it has to be done by congress. Bruce Lyman stated that they can. Council member Grover stated that they’ve done it before. Council member Taylor stated that it’s like West Water, the Navajo Nation owns West Water, but they still pay property tax. Elaine said that she has called and had a conversation with the State Tax Commission and she is waiting to hear back from them. She said the outcome will all depend on the legality of the sale. Her office is desperately trying to find a way to keep some of the TRT..
  - She spoke of a lodging place in San Juan County that has done well in the short time they have been open. She said that if we lose the TRT from Gouldings, then we need to find a way to bring in more lodging properties. Bluff Dwellings have expanded. But we can use 5 or 6 more hotels spread across San Juan County north to south.
  - Elaine said that they have a housing assessment being done and it should be completed by April or May and it will give us a guideline on what we should be looking for as far as a need for housing. She said that new businesses don’t



come to San Juan County because there is a housing crisis. She said that she applied for a grant and got \$15,000 from the state that will help offset the cost of the assessment.

- Elaine said that through ICMA and the Economic Recovery Act, hundreds and hundreds of communities and different organizations applied and San Juan County was granted a fellow. A man (and his family) will come here, probably in March, for two and a half years, it won't cost us a dime, and his sole focus will be taking that assessment and working with consultants and then following up on what we can do to increase the housing stock.
- Elaine said that her office is also going to conduct a blight report. because when she came to San Juan County she couldn't believe how many commercial businesses were closed up. It is sad. She is hoping the report will help them help the owners of these properties. She is hoping the blight report will be done by the end of the year.
- Elaine stated that she got about half a million dollars of grant funding and she along with the BLM and Grand County active trails and transportation are putting in a trail in Mud Springs, in Spanish Valley. It will be our first trail and it will be NIKA sanctioned where we can have high school biking races. It will be adaptive so we can have adaptive racers and riders. And hopefully, fingers crossed, it will be for class 1 E-bikes. It is the first of hopefully many trails that she will be able to create in San Juan county.
- Council member Grover made the comment that San Juan County's biggest need is in the food industry. Elaine agrees. She spoke about the overbite that opened in Monticello, she said it is doing well. She said the Ja-Roen restaurant is under new ownership. They have brought employees and chefs from Thailand. And they have bought some apartment property and will be fixing them up for the employees.
- Elaine secured \$175,000 in rural grant money. They received 40 applications from individuals and organizations asking for grant money. The county development board will review those applications and decide which one's warrant funding.
- Elaine has been in contact with the man who works on the real estate for Love's. They have had multiple conversations. It was stated that the previous county commissioners teamed up with the pack creek people and voted against it. But the new commissioners have signed the resolution that says, "San Juan is open for business." Love's wants their store close enough to Moab to benefit from the Moab population, tourists and workers.
- Elaine stated that we are exporting children out of the county everyday. They leave and get an education, but there isn't much for them to come back to.
- Mayor Pro Tem Bowers thanked Elaine for being there and for her information. She was very impressed with her grants. She stated that Blanding hired an economic development person because they didn't feel like they were getting the support they needed from the county. Mayor Pro Tem asked if there was something specific that is driving the restaurants to Monticello and not Blanding. Elaine talked about the buildings and the space. She owns a space in Monticello that she is fixing up.



- Elaine stated that her office markets land and properties that are available in the county. They again discussed the issue of the food industry in Blanding. There is the issue of finding staff and housing the staff. They talked about the university and how it should be a good source for an employee pool.
- Elaine said that there is a hospitality course being taught in Monument Valley, and it is the very first one ever in the county. She said they're going to meet with the school district and see if they can get similar classes into the high schools.
- Mayor Pro Tem Bowers stated that the majority of our tax dollars go to the county and the school district and the city gets a very minimal amount of tax dollars. When it comes to depending on the county for developmental help, we need that help, and it feels like Spanish Valley gets a lot of attention, and they should because they can be a good tax base for the county, and Monticello gets taken care of and the South gets taken care of because it's Monument Valley and it feels like Blanding gets left out. Elaine stated that she wants to go to every city and meet with the economic development director and the city manager and discuss what their strategic plan is and what they are looking for. She said there is a lot of grant money out there.

#### 4. Senior Citizens - Cheryl Bowers

- The people that were planning on making a presentation got an update from the county today on the use of the facility and so they wanted to hold off until the next meeting. It is a county building and it is funded by the county, but they feel like the city can help with some of the problems they have.
- Patty Lyman stated that the hours that the building is open is very minimal and the resources that are in the building are not available. They provide food on some days but they don't allow other activities in the building. The senior population is another population that needs to be considered.

#### 5. Transfer Station Options - Trent Herring

- a. Direct citizens to the San Juan County Landfill
- b. Two to three times a year free dump day
- c. Hire for Wednesdays from 1-6 pm
  - Trent said that he reached out to the county and their interest in running a transfer station is zero to none, which is not surprising. Some other options are listed above.
  - Council member Grover asked if we ran an ad for a position. Trent said that we haven't because he wanted to discuss these options first.
  - The group had a general discussion about the different options. James said that there have been very very few complaints about the transfer station being closed. They discussed the cost of paying someone for opening one day. They talked about the hours and adjusting hours in the winter. Council member Taylor suggested that we put a current city employee there for a five hour shift. They discussed what can be taken to the transfer station and what can't be.
  - Council gave advice and consent to move ahead with A and B.





#### 6. Pacifcorp Contract Analysis

- Trent went over the cost and expenses paid to Pacifcorp. He broke down prices if Blanding were to hire our own linemen and employees compared to what we are paying now to Pacifcorp. He said that the costs he put on the spreadsheet are very conservative. He calculated those costs out to 8 years and it was just going up and up for the city. He feels like the payments to Pacifcorp are justified and cost saving.
- Trent stated that he is planning on meeting with Wayne Johnson and discussing plans for when the Rocky Mountain employees do retire. Rocky Mountain doesn't sell us the power, they maintain the equipment.

#### 7. Natural Gas Lock - Trent Herring

- Trent said that our current natural gas contract is locked up until October of 2024. Our current price per decotherm is \$7.49. (Last week it was at \$5.90) He said that there are a lot of factors that drive that price up and down. Our prices are determined a lot by the weather out of southern California. Another thing that determines costs are presidential elections. Trent stated that we can do a lock in multiple different ways. You can go month by month, but that can be risky. There was a time in the last 12 months that a decotherm was \$49.00.
- Trent stated that we can lock in more than once. We can do a 25% lock, we can do that four times. We can lock in at 50% and then watch the market. Four locks is the max. Trent recommends that we watch it and think about a lock, not a full 100% but a smaller percentage.
- Council member Grover wants to lock in some now, at least a quarter and then watch it. Trent explained that the lock doesn't happen four times a year, but four different lock prices a term. We can choose 1 year, 2 years or 3 years. Trent recommends a 2 year. We will look at our last 3 years of historical usage. There is a certain amount we have to buy and if we don't use it all, and the prices go up, they will sell our overage and we will make the difference.
- Council member Grover stated that natural gas is not related to crude but they are seeing an uptick in crude oil prices.
- Trent stated that the way they determine the month's price is by the previous month's last 5 days.
- Council gave advice and consent to bring an action item to the next meeting with prices and percentages.

#### 8. TPA Grant for the General Plan - Trent Herring

- Trent said that that is on track to be brought before Council At the next meeting on February 13. We have a public hearing with the Planning Commission on February 8th. Trent said that he will send the council a link with the minor changes. It is also available to all the public.

#### 9. Energy Fuels Water Contract - Trent Herring

- Trent hopes to have that done at the end of February. They had Energy Fuels send us the proposed contract. Trent prefers to have it a teared contract. Patrick went to his first water conservancy district meeting last week and is



learning a lot more about it. Trent stated that it is a pretty favorable contract.

- Council member Bowers said that when this was brought to the council before they wanted to make sure that the mill was taken care of. They are a big employer for the city. We want to make sure that we are fair to them. Trent stated that the contract states specifically *if* the water is available. 7.00
- Trent said that an exciting thing with the mill, they asked what it would take to get them a natural gas line out to them. Currently the city uses, roughly, 250,000 decatherms a year. By 2026 the mill will potentially be using 300,000 decatherms a year. He is excited about the possibility. It's very preliminary, but exciting. The mill is planning on hiring 100 more employees. It would cost, roughly, a million dollars a mile for the natural gas line. It would have to be run from the distribution center by the visitor center out to the mill. There was more discussion on additional houses and farms tapping into the line, since the city owns a business that sells gas, they may as well tap into houses along the way. It was also mentioned that Blanding desperately needs more housing.

10. Bears Ears National Monument Cooperating Agency - Trent Herring

- Trent said that he worked with Ben on a letter and it's something that the council has already been a part of in the past. Multiple agencies put this letter together to send to them to request a meeting to get an update on what their plans are. They haven't heard anything from them in a long time. Ben has been very involved in this.

### Closed Session

**Council member Ewald moved to enter a closed session. Council member Grover seconded the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Bowers repeated the motion and asked for discussion. Hearing none, she called for a vote.**

**Those voting Aye:**

**Councilmember Taylor  
Councilmember Grover  
Councilmember Nielson  
Councilmember Ewald**

**Those voting Nay:**

**None**

**Constituting all members thereof, Mayor Pro Tem Bowers declared the motion carried.**



## Adjournment

**Councilmember Grover moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Taylor seconded the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Bowers repeated the motion and asked for discussion. Hearing none, she called for a vote.**

**Those voting Aye:                      Councilmember Taylor  
   Councilmember Ewald  
   Councilmember Grover  
   Councilmember Nielson**

**Those voting Nay:                      None**

**Constituting all members thereof, Mayor Pro Tem Bowers declared the motion carried.**

Council adjourned the meeting  
By:

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Nicole Holliday