

# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## Town of Meeker Meeting Minutes - September 16, 2025

The Regular Meeting of the Meeker Town Board was held Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at Town Hall.

Members Present	Mayor Trustees	Day Browning Day Madison Nielsen Sizemore Smith
Town Staff Present	Administrator Town Clerk Attorney Police Chief Comm. Dev./Planner Public Works Supt.	Etheridge Cook Massih Thompson Thomson Kilduff

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Day called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **ROLL CALL**

All Board members were present except for Trustee Lockwood.

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Mayor Day asked for changes to the agenda. Trustee Sizemore made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Second by Trustee Browning. All ayes. Motion carried.

### **APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Trustee Madison made a motion to approve the minutes of September 2, 2025, as submitted. Second by Trustee Day. All ayes. Motion carried.

### **APPROVAL OF MONTHLY DISBURSEMENTS**

After addressing questions for a few of the vouchers, Trustee Browning made a motion to approve the disbursements dated September 16, 2025. Second by Trustee Smith. All ayes. Motion carried.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ed Peck addressed the Board regarding the passage of Proposition 122 which legalizes supervised use of psychedelics “magic mushrooms” (natural medicine, which is any form of psilocyn or psilocybin) at state licensed facilities and he would like to see something from the Town discouraging these facilities from coming in to this community. Peck said we could see a healing center here that charges a fee for their service where the customer then receives a free product. The Town can write things into law regarding zoning requirements, fire codes, or require 24/7 security, which is very expensive, or require that a facility cannot be within 1,000 feet of any school owned property. Trustee Madison asked what has changed; Peck said the passage of Proposition 122, which now allows these facilities, and next year even more psychedelics (such as Dimethyltryptamine, Ibogaine, Mescaline) will be allowed. Trustee Sizemore asked if this is what has been used for mental health, and Trustee Smith asked where the nearest healing center is. Niki Turner stated she thought Carbondale or Aspen. Peck said we cannot override the State of Colorado by not allowing this in our community, the urgency is our laws have to be put in place before someone comes here to open one.

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### **STAFF UPDATES**

Public Works Supt. Kilduff reported 33,683,968 gallons of water was pumped last month, the tank divers were here this week and found no big fixes needed, Levi Dinwiddie started work today and worked with Timberline at the well field to get that up and running, the generator that was leased during the fires is being returned, Cory and Daylon both will be attending water school this week, and we had one water leak on Cleveland.

Police Chief Thompson reported his department received 254 regular calls for service in August, with many more fire related calls, eleven citations were issued resulting in five arrests, and we now have a Certified Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) in staff. Trustee Madison asked if the Charges column on the report could be expanded to include the entire description; Thompson replied it is a printing issue with the report. Thompson also said they began outfitting the new patrol truck on the 12<sup>th</sup> and it should be at the shipping yard next week.

Planner Thomson reported her departmental update was included in the Board packets, two conditional use permits will come before the Board next month, and that she has been working with the Fire Recovery group. Thomson informed the Board, due to the passage of SB24-174, the Town's Housing Needs Assessment from 2023 will need to be updated to align with those requirements and methodology from the Colo. Dept. of Local Affairs (DOLA). Ayres and Associates, who completed the current assessment, has provided a scope of work to bring it in compliance at a cost of \$10,000, and they could have it done by the end of the year. Trustee Sizemore asked if this has been budgeted, Thomson replied yes, under the Housing Study/Action Plan line item.

Clerk Cook reported liquor license renewals were issued for White River Convenience, Mexican House, and Clark's Market, and Special Event Permits granted for Jammin' Lamb and Meeker Mustang Makeover. A Festival Permit was sent to the State for Smoking River Brewery for October 11<sup>th</sup>. The applicant has been working with Chief Thompson and staff regarding a control plan, and parking and traffic requirements, the south end of First Street will be closed to vehicles in order to utilize the parking area across from the Brewery for a food tent and overflow from the event.

Attorney Massih reported there would be court next week, as usual she is helping where needed, and trying to move along the North 40 easement agreement for County Road 8.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

***Consideration of Watershed Permit from Meeker Land LLC.*** Mayor Day informed everyone he had a conflict of interest as Meeker Land LLC is one of his clients. Administrator Etheridge introduced Kurt Hotto, property owner for Meeker Land LLC, and the builder, Barney LeBlanc who were both present and Will Myers with Headwater Engineering who was on the phone.

Administrator Etheridge reported the following:

~ In 2015, the Town worked with CRWA to create a Watershed District to maintain and protect the Town's waterworks from injury and water supply from pollution. This permit process has evolved out of that creation, and in 2023 the Town established a partnership with Rio Blanco County Building Department to support a joint effort in upholding this level of protection.

~ Headwater Engineering submitted a preliminary application which included an engineering report and design for the Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) on August 13<sup>th</sup>, and it was reviewed by our

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engineer, Chris Hale with Mountain Cross; his comments were received via letter on September 2<sup>nd</sup> and shared with Headwater Engineering. These comments were addressed in an updated application on September 9<sup>th</sup>, and the full application, including a letter from the property owner, was received, signed, and paid for on September 10<sup>th</sup>. Any concerns regarding excavating and grading were also reviewed by staff and the recommendation is for approval of the permit for OWTS and excavation, filling, and grading for Meeker Land LLC.

Mayor Day asked for questions from the Board. Administrator Etheridge thanked Hotto for his letter which helped with the application process. Trustee Madison asked if the stipulations by our engineer were addressed, with Etheridge replying they all were addressed in the final application. Trustee Sizemore made a motion to approve the Watershed Permit for Meeker Land LLC. Second by Trustee Browning. Aye: Trustees Browning, Madison, Sizemore, and Smith. Trustee Day abstained due to a conflict of interest. Motion carried.

***Review of draft 2026 budget.*** Town Clerk Cook stated each department reflects a four percent cost of living increase for all employees. The raise was calculated by increasing the 2025 annual payroll by four percent and dividing that amount by the number of employees which resulted in a \$2,564 annual increase for each employee. The adjustment for health insurance with the higher deductible plan has been included. Salary and benefits have also been included for the School Resource Officer in the Police Dept. The potential COP grant award of \$41,700 has been included in revenue under Police Dept. Grants although we will not be notified until October.

Most departments have an increase in liability insurance. Training, meals, and travel line items have been increased in the Administrative, Community Development, Public Works, and Police Departments. The software support line items reflect the annual fees for migrating to the Cloud with the accounting software, the new water billing software, an increase for the meter reading software and camera software in the Police Dept.

All items discussed at the previous meeting have been included in the Systems Development Departments with the General Fund totaling \$2,695,300 and the Water Fund totaling \$248,000. As presented, \$2,201,197 in reserves will be required to balance the General Fund and \$35,323 in reserves to balance the Water Fund. Year-end estimates for cash and investments are GF \$7,914,774 and WF \$915,202.

Trustee Madison commented he felt we should be presenting a more balanced budget without taking money out of reserves and had several questions regarding revenue line items for sales and use tax, franchise tax, PD surcharge transfer, the capacity planning grant, and also expense line items commenting on discretionary funds and wondered if the Board should back off a little on these to help get closer to a balanced budget. Mayor Day explained the reason we keep those line items higher is in case we have an awesome project come in, if we don't have anything allocated we can't take advantage of it; referring to the systems development department, many items are a budgeted expenditure so that if we receive a grant for the project then it will move forward and if not a lot of times the project doesn't happen. Madison said the problem is that the general public looks at the \$2.9 million required from reserves and thinks that we are overspending on the budget. Trustee Browning said when you look at year over year, we are barely spending fifty percent of the budget, so that means the reserves on the balance sheet are not actually happening. Trustee Smith commented that we had talked about this in our workshop.

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Trustee Madison said he would rather see the budget be what we actually think we are going to spend and do a supplemental budget if needed. Cook said that the systems development projects/expense have been included in the budget at the direction of the Board, the potential revenue/grant piece of this is not, and it has been the Board's philosophy to use reserve funds for capital needs. There was discussion regarding educating the public about our budget in a newspaper article.

***Consideration of application to Yampa Valley Disaster Relief Fund (YVDRF).*** Administrator Etheridge reported the Yampa Valley Community Foundation (YVCF) is the housing mechanism for the Elk and Lee Wildfire Disaster Relief Funds. They have set up an ad hoc committee to help with distribution of the funds, including three or four local committee members representing government, business, agriculture, and human services within RBC. There is discussion among the committee that a portion of the funds should be reserved for agriculture, a portion for business and economic recovery, and a portion for basic human needs. Since the Foundation's policy is to distribute funds to non-profits, as outlined in their requirements, in order to support the economic recovery portion the Town has stepped up to be the applicant organization and has worked with the Chamber of Commerce to develop a process for local businesses to apply for the funding, which is based on the Foundation's eligibility guidelines. As Community Development Director, Carly will be the contact person for the application to the Foundation, as well as the administrator of the funding for local businesses, the Town Board will make the final decision on local business and economic recovery funding.

Mayor Day asked if the Town would only be taking over the businesses, not agriculture, and will it be for both the Town and the County; Etheridge replied that was correct for both.

Planner Thomson referenced data that was shared through the Colo. Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management from the Business Disaster Impact and Damage Survey that was sent out last month – this shows over \$3M in financial impact within the County, so the need is very real, and this will at least provide some relief, even if it is small.

Administrator Etheridge said if the Board agrees with this process, Carly will apply to the Foundation for a percentage of economic recovery funds. The Committee meets twice a week and should consider the applications immediately so moving forward with helping local businesses is imminent.

Thomson said we could see applications as early as next week. Trustee Smith asked if there was an online application, Thomson replied there is no mechanism for that, but it can be emailed, adding the survey is still open and has no closing date at this point, it will be on a rolling basis. Trustee Madison asked how an applicant would find out about this. Thomson said the Town in cooperation with the Chamber has contacted every business encouraging them to complete the survey, this will include some areas of Garfield County as well, all that were impacted are encouraged to apply.

Mayor Day called for a motion to approve the Town applying for and distributing the YVCF Funds. Moved by Trustee Day. Second by Trustee Browning. All ayes. Motion carried.

***Discussion regarding parks lease with ERBM Recreation and Park District.*** Administrator Etheridge reported the following:

~ ERBM made it clear at our annual joint meeting last month that they are not satisfied with the current lease agreement for the Town parks. Their proposal was for the Town to convey ownership of all seven parks, stating that "they can not justify investing in property that they do not own" and followed up with if

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Mayor Day called for a motion to approve the Town applying for and distributing the YVDR Funds. Moved by Trustee Day. Second by Trustee Browning. All ayes. Motion carried.

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not conveyed they would terminate the lease and the Town would have to take over maintenance of the parks.

~ ERBM did share a document that included more information including their mill levy language, a summary of their Statutory Service Plan, the history of the parks lease agreement, and some additional financials. This document also included two additional solutions to their issue, one being to split the parks and convey ownership of only some, with a management contract for the others, or to renegotiate a management contract for all the parks in lieu of a lease agreement. We now know there is some room for discussion.

~ In analysis of the costs of park maintenance, without having any idea of an estimate for some possible items like pond chemicals, playground equipment, and administrative, legal or security costs, the projected number from ERBM stands pretty true to what the Town estimated for 2026, just over \$300,000. It should be noted that there are tangible costs associated with the utilities that the Town currently covers – almost \$10K annually for electric and free water. Should the District take ownership of the parks they would see a potential increase in utility costs of \$100K.

~ The financial justifications for any property transfer are difficult to make, however, while the Town Board may feel like they have been backed into a corner and are inclined to say “fine, we can do it ourselves” and take the parks back – think about what’s best for the community and this organization. As far as fiscal responsibility goes, it would be even less wise for the Town to absorb all park maintenance considering the extensive staffing, equipment, certification, and training costs that would be incurred, with no additional or dedicated revenue stream indicated to support it.

Administrator Etheridge said her recommendation is to move toward a renegotiation of the agreement – whether that is in the form of a management contract or a complete overhaul of the lease. This would leave the parks in the hands of the equipped and trained professionals, keep costs low for both the entities, thus protecting the financial interests of the public, and hopefully re-establish a positive working relationship between the Town and the District.

Mayor Day asked Attorney Massih, from the information the District provided, if she had found any reason they can’t use their mill levy for the parks. Massih said she could not see where they cannot use their mill levy for parks, there is no language regarding that or that they must own the property. Etheridge said their statutory document, in summary, includes community playgrounds, parks, trails, and facility rentals; Massih added the inclusion of conservation of open space for recreational interest in the summary and said they have the ability to do this.

Mayor Day clarified the estimation of annual costs stating it would be a big initial outlay but possibly less in the long run. Trustee Smith clarified the mill levy language, cost estimations, agenda for the workshop with the ERBM and that it would be open to the public. Trustee Madison questioned the reason for the District’s request and Etheridge confirmed that the stated reason from ERBM is still that “they don’t want to invest any money in property they don’t own” and reiterated that both Boards should focus on what is best for the community. Mayor Day asked whether the Board concurred that the best options for the sake of discussion would be to either leave the lease agreement as it is or to renegotiate the lease; Trustee Smith stated she wants what’s best for the community; Trustee Madison asked about what negotiation options we had; Trustee Browning asked for clarification on the financial breakdown of information from 2021 and Etheridge shared that the 2021 information resulted in the Town taking over more utility costs; Trustee Day

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asked whether the Town could stop the District from making capital improvements to the parks and Etheridge stated that the 2022 lease amendment did add stipulations for more Town oversight of park improvements and that this was possibly the reason the District was seeking some change towards greater autonomy.

## **MANAGER'S REPORT**

Circle Park update – ERBM's contract with X Field for the purchase and installation of the vault toilet was amended with a completion date of September 30<sup>th</sup>. The X Field crew will mobilize next week to prep the site with an anticipated delivery on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. This should finalize the project, the grant funding requests can be submitted, and we can invoice ERBM for their portion of the match by the end of the third quarter.

## **MAYOR'S REMARKS**

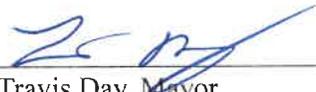
The Mayor had no remarks.

## **OTHER BOARD BUSINESS**

Trustee Madison commented on the training line items in the budget, specifically in the Police Dept., and asked that we please use these funds in all depts., adding we also need to stop studying housing and do something about it, we need to take a hard look at it. Mayor Day replied the Town is working on it right now through the housing partnership.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Day adjourned the meeting at 8:39 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Travis Day, Mayor

Attest:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa Cook, Town Clerk