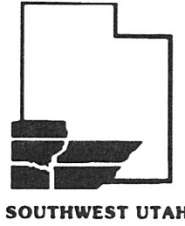


Five County Association of Governments

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MINUTES

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2024, AT 12:00 P.M.

MEETING HELD AT FESTIVAL HALL; COMBINED ROOMS 5 & 6; 105 N. 100 E., CEDAR CITY, UTAH
MEETING WAS ALSO AVAILABLE VIA A ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

REPRESENTING

Commissioner Celeste Meyeres	Kane County Commission
Commissioner Paul Cozzens	Iron County Commission
Commissioner Gil Almquist	Washington County Commission
Commissioner Wade Hollingshead	Beaver County Commission
Commissioner Jerry Taylor	Garfield County Commission
Hurricane City Mayor Nannette Billings	Washington County Mayors
Escalante City Mayor Melanie Torgersen	Garfield County Mayors
Cedar City Mayor Garth Green	Iron County Mayors
Milford City Mayor Nolan Davis	Beaver County Mayors
Orderville Town Mayor Lyle Goulding	Kane County Mayors
Mr. Tyler Fails	Beaver County School Board
Mr. Curtis Barney (via ZOOM)	Garfield County School Board
Mr. Terry Hutchingson (via ZOOM)	Washington County School Board

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

REPRESENTING

Mr. Bryan Thiriote	Five County AOG Executive Director
Mr. Gary Zabriskie	Five County AOG Deputy Director/Chief Technology Officer/Director of Community and Economic Development
Mr. Nate Wiberg	Five County AOG Community & Economic Development Planning Manager
Ms. Melissa Brown	Five County Care About Child Care Office Support
Mr. Gary Webster	Senator Mike Lee
Mr. Kyle Wilson	Senator Mitt Romney
Ms. Tani Downing	Congresswoman Celeste Maloy
Ms. Cindy Bulloch	Congresswoman Celeste Maloy

BEAVER

GARFIELD

IRON

KANE

WASHINGTON

I. Welcome by the Chair – Introductions of all participating in-person and on ZOOM online.

Steering Committee Chair, Mayor Celeste Meyeres, welcomed all to the Five County Association of Governments Steering Committee meeting, calling the meeting to order at 12:22 p.m. She

stated that the location of the meeting as Festival Hall in Cedar City, and the date being January 10, 2024.

She stated that January is her final month as Chair, and at the March meeting it will rotate to Washington County and in the coming years, it goes clockwise to Iron, Beaver, Garfield, and then Kane again, in that order. The Chair had everyone in person and online introduce themselves.

II. Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chair asked for a volunteer to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Washington County Commissioner Gil Almquist led the pledge allegiance.

III. Adopt a Resolution Reaffirming policy that states that Steering Committee members may continue to count towards a quorum, as well as vote, while participating electronically.

The Chair stated that they have an agenda item to adopt a resolution reaffirming a policy that states that Steering Committee members may continue to count toward a quorum, as well as vote, while participating electronically.

Hurricane City Mayor Nannette Billings made a motion to approve the resolution reaffirming a policy that states that Steering Committee members may continue to count toward a quorum, as well as vote, while participating electronically. Milford City Mayor Nolan Davis seconded that motion.

The Chair indicated that there was a motion to approve the resolution and a second on the table, and opened it up for discussion. Mr. Gary Zabriskie, Deputy Director at the Association explained that this was brought up in the Board training Johnny Miller from UCIP gave back in November. He said that it was important that the Steering Committee have a formal resolution that adopts such a policy. Mr. Zabriskie said that he could not easily find any record that this was in place in old minutes but was confident that it had. He stated that he felt the best course of action would be to reaffirm that policy via a resolution. He said that it may be in some old minutes, but he just felt it was safe for us to have this resolution in place that allowed us to have electronic meetings, especially when the weather turns bad and things like that. The Chair mentioned that from reviewing it, that there's no anchor location required, or anchor attendance, so it could just be 100% electronic. Mr. Zabriskie stated that staff would post the anchor location when a meeting is scheduled, because that could change from time to time, so that is not in the resolution. He also said that it was his understanding that you don't have to have an anchor location if you allow the

public to participate electronically. The Chair stated that she believes that we should still, unless it's an emergency, require an anchor location and anchor attendance, and not just go to straight electronic. She explained that the reason is she finds a lot of value in meeting in person together in a way that isn't as beneficial to do online. Mr. Zabriskie said that this doesn't in any way require you to not have a physical location for a meeting and have an in-person meeting, but is just stating that if you have it available electronically, it's available to any member that has a specific need to participate electronically, and that they would count as being a member of making up a quorum, and also having the ability to vote. The Chair said that since it doesn't explicitly call out the need for an anchor location for anchor attendees, then it leaves the door open for completely electronic attendance and she doesn't want to see that. Mr. Zabriskie said that going forward, unless there is a specific urgency to hold a purely electronic meeting, staff will publicly advertise these with a physical location for the meeting. He said that an example would be a massive storm that came through and you're not going to get a quorum there. The majority could maybe come in electronically, but you'd still have some at the anchor location for those who could travel. Mr. Zabriskie said that when we post the notice to this meeting there will be an anchor location, and this just gives us the opportunity to involve some members electronically, such as when somebody happens to be in Washington, D.C., but they want to participate in the Steering Committee, they can be a voting member of the Steering Committee. The Chair reiterated that she was concerned that this isn't trying to create a method or a backdoor for non-physical meetings like we're having today. She was concerned about it creating that backdoor for meetings that do not have an anchor location or anchor attendees unless the resolution were to be modified to include that requirement.

Mayor Billings agreed with the Chair's concern that too many people may routinely take that option for just various reasons, and we won't get as many people here to Steering Committee. It was mentioned that a main concern was that ZOOM-only or electronic-only meetings, such as were implemented during the initial COVID response, created an environment where it was really difficult for people to meaningfully participate, and there were some other concerns, like if someone's in an closed session and they're participating via ZOOM, do you know or not know that someone else is down there listening, for example? The Chair said that she preferred there to be some anchor location and anchor attendance as the preferred, and in an emergency, it could be an exception for urgency or emergency, but just to not have that safeguard in there, she thinks it sets a precedent that she wouldn't want to do.

Mr., Zabriskie asked about putting in another line that states that it is the intent of all Steering Committee meetings to be in-person except in extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Chair? Mr. Zabriskie said he was just trying to cover the fact that he couldn't readily find something in writing that specifically authorized the electronic meetings and wanted to cover that issue based on the training we had in November. He said that there has been a few times where we had an anchor meeting, but we had to count on one or more persons online to constitute a quorum. He said we don't want somebody to say you really didn't have a quorum because you didn't have an adopted policy. Mr. Zabriskie said that he couldn't quickly find that policy if somebody asked for it, so that's why he is trying to get a policy done so that the Association has that. Mayor Billings said that she would like is either a finding or a stipulation under the "therefore, be it resolved", that there

shall be an anchor location, except for in the case of emergencies and that there shall be an attendance of at least two individuals in person at the anchor location. Mr. Zabriskie said that the second page, if you look at exhibit A, that's what it refers to here, exhibit A, which was the actual policy, and the other a resolution adopting the policy. He explained that it says that the Steering Committee may conduct electronic meetings. He said that it says the Steering Committee chair may from time to time convene and conduct a meeting with a quorum present in which one or more members may attend electrically and count towards the quorum.

The Chair asked for a show of hands, just for consensus purposes, if everyone okay with that? She then asked if anyone was strongly against it and hear other arguments. She also asked if anybody opposed to it and wants to speak to it? It was brought up that if they are forced to have two people there, what if you can't get two people there, say in an emergency, and what is going to qualify that? It was mentioned that there was a snow day there last year and that nobody could make it.

The Chair stated that this was a good discussion, and there is a motion by Mayor Billings and a friendly amendment with the modification of the policy to include the language that was stated by the Chair, which was seconded by Mayor Nolan Davis. The Chair called for a vote.

The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Review and Approve Draft Minutes from November 8, 2023 Steering Committee meeting.

The Chair moved on to Agenda Item #IV. to review and approve draft minutes for the November 8th, 2023 Steering Committee meeting. She entertained any discussion that might be needed, and seeing none, called for a motion.

Commissioner Gil Almquist moved to approve. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Wade Hollingshead.

That motion carried unanimously.

V. Consider and Adopt a Resolution Reaffirming the Appointment of Executive Director and Reaffirming Authorization of Performance of Administrative Duties.

The Steering Committee considered adoption of a resolution reaffirming the appointment of the executive director and reaffirming authorization of performance of administrative duties. Executive Director Bryan Thiriot covered this item. He said that an issue occurred just recently where the Association was leasing two Toyota RAV4s and the leasing agency through Toyota wanted to know what authorizes Bryan Thiriot to sign stuff for a lease and we didn't have anything that could be found that specifically authorized it. Mr. Zabriskie added that he thought it was good to put in a resolution that would basically spell out the Executive Director's responsibilities as being appointed as the executive director of the organization. He said that with this resolution would state that things like leases are within the domain of an administrative decision because they're short-term.

It was also explained that we were asked by the auditors and several agencies, that we do business with, is whether we have a continuity plan? Mr. Zabriskie described a scenario such as what happens if Bryan Thiriote has a stroke tomorrow, who signs checks? He explained that right now, both himself and Carrie Schonlaw, which is another deputy director can sign checks. He explained that is just signing checks for the bank that clears them through the bank. He expressed concerns for other things that administratively would need to happen. He explained that in a planned absence Bryan could appoint or in the case of an unplanned event for a period of time either Carrie Schonlaw or myself could function as the executive director for that absence. He said that anything that's long-term or permanent, it would come back to this board. He said that this is why he put it in there, so that the executive functions would be exercised by the executive director's designee or, if necessary, by the person named by the steering committee as acting executive director, so it could be someone else also. Mr. Zabriskie said that staff will research what the other AOGs might have in place, and there is no great urgency in this but is something that should be addressed at some point in the near future and will bring this back at a future meeting once it has been further researched and drafts circulated to the members.

The Chair, in the absence of any motion, took the prerogative to table this item with the feedback provided that maybe the next version will have “recitals”, and “whereas”, besides the “therefore”.

VI. Utah Broadband Center Presentation/Discussion.

Rebecca Dilg of the Utah Broadband Center said that she appreciated the Committee having her, and said that it's been interesting to hear the previous discussions. She agreed 100% the value of being in person, and regretted that she did not come down, but she was concerned because of the weather warnings that had been received. She said she thought she could have gotten down there okay in the morning, but was not sure if she could have made it back okay. She apologized for not being there in person, but did have a presentation, and she hoped that it would be as effective and that everyone will feel free to ask any questions and to please stop her at any time. The ZOOM projected screen was shared with Ms. Dilg so she could make the presentation. She explained about the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment that is happening now in 2024 and said she was hoping this isn't the first time you've heard about this. She said that this is an effort they've been working on now for this last year. She said that the Broadband Equity Access Deployment Fund is federal funding that is coming to every state in the nation, and Utah has been allocated \$317.4 million that they are to then distribute where it's needed across the state to ensure that everyone is connected to high-speed Internet. She said that their efforts this last year have included is visiting every county where possible and holding workshops to get feedback on the different challenges or whether it maybe is or is not broadband infrastructure, and where there is infrastructure, they are also looking at the three A's of high-speed Internet or broadband. She explained that the first is availability, which has to do with the infrastructure. She said the second was accessibility, which is the devices, computers, tablets and smartphones that people are able to access it, and the third is affordability, which means can people access it because they can pay for it or not, is it cost-effective? She said that along with the availability, it's really important to think of

reliability. She explained that when talking about Internet, they are not talking about just connecting, but it is especially important today, and in the future, to have reliable high-speed Internet. She said that they are following the FCC's definition of what high-speed Internet is, and they suspect that there are some locations in the five county region that our providers maybe are reporting that it's considered served, like you have the full range of speeds, but maybe it's not reliable, and so maybe you're losing it, or it's not steady, or you have downtime, or other reasons. She explained that this often comes about because of either it's not a fiber optic, or it's not a licensed wireless. She said that they have put together a digital connectivity plan. She said the grant to the state came with a lot of stipulations, and the stipulations to first have the plan, and then an initial proposal that we have to let the federal government know, and also our citizens here in Utah, how we're going to distribute these BEED funds. She said that the plan was submitted it to NTIA, and once volume one is approved, they are going to begin a state challenge process, which is a requirement of NTIA, that every state has to do. She said that they need the help of all entities, and it's really important that they are getting feedback on the local level, of where there might be areas of need still. She said the state challenge process will determine the unserved and underserved locations that will be eligible for BEED funding which is to show that it is truly an unserved location, or getting speeds of less than 25 megabits per second download, and 3 megabits per second upload. She showed a number of maps on several PowerPoint slides.

She finished by stating that our state challenge process is coming up right away and that is why she was visiting with the Steering Committee today. She said that the timeline is limited to just so many days per the federal requirements and this will be tentatively starting January 30th. She explained that they cannot start until their volume one is approved, which has been submitted. She said that once it's approved, they can run the challenge process. She explained about the process for participating in the Challenge and said that there will be a Challenge portal She gave a link to take everyone to the Challenge portal and the five-year digital connectivity plan which is at <https://connectingutah.com> .

VII. “Did You Know? FCAOG Presentation – Care About Child Care.

Ms. Melissa Brown with Five County Care About Child Care introduced herself and said that she started March 2020, just in time for everything to get real crazy with COVID. She explained that they are under the umbrella of the Department of Workforce Services and the Office of Child Care. She said that she works under Carrie Sigler who is the Five County AOG director of Care About Childcare. She said that this is different than childcare licensing, which is who goes in and does safety inspections, makes sure everybody has their CDR certifications, stuff like that. She explained that she is CDA specialist, so she runs the CDA program. She explained that CDA is Child Development and Associated Credentials. She said that the AOG also has a specialist who does training and helps develop curriculum. There is also a support person and also early childhood specialists who do observations for quality system and coaching. She said there is also a data specialist and a CCQS specialist. She said that their mission statement is to improve the quality of life for the children in southern Utah who are enrolled in our early care and education programs and provide support to their families and their caregivers. She explained that our five-county Care About Childcare covers five of the six-county region's counties as well, so we cover ten counties. She

explained that in the ten counties, they have 34 daycare center programs, and 84 family and residential certificate programs. She said that these number don't include the Head Start programs, school district preschools, hourly-childcare, drop-in childcare, tribals, all of that. She said that they serve over 4,000 children in our area. She said that the main service they provide for parents are referrals. They used to be mostly phone calls. She explained that now you can just go online to their website and search by address, search by specific program as there is filters for ages of children, for vacancies, if you need special needs care, anything like that. She said that the beauty of that is that if you want to have childcare while you're working, you may want to have that childcare near where you're working in case there's an emergency or a sick child, so you can get closer to there, or you might want it closer to your home. She said it allows you to specify where you have childcare, and then it gives maps of the providers on Google Maps.

Ms. Brown said that with the referral piece, they need to educate parents on what does quality childcare look like. A brand-new parent may not know the difference between essential childcare and family child care, or why their kid would do better in one or the other. She said that many are not going to know what maybe cleanliness measures to look for or asking what a sick-policy is. She said that those are important things. She said that they also do community events such as county fairs, and make the program known. She said that they also steer parents toward options like Head Start, behavior resources, mental health resources, for kids and providers. She said that they have startup grants and currently still have available a large chunk of COVID money that will go to people who want to start up a center or a family childcare. She said that they also have a big piece of marketing that's going to go to that same thing. They are looking to recruit new childcare providers and the counties they are going to focus on in the spring are Sanpete and Kane.

She said that this fiscal year, they have had eight new providers. She said that they have three or four more in process, meaning they're going through the licensing process and purchasing materials and all of that. She said that they have spent over \$12,000 on family programs, getting them up and running again. She said that CACC reimburses for things like fingerprints for their employees, and CACC can help them put a fence up if they need a fence around their property, and things like that.

She said that for providers they do professional development. She said that there's a lot of good online options now for professional development. She said that their Care About Childcare classes are only \$5 right now, so they're really accessible. She explained that providers are required to have a minimum of 20 hours of training every year, which CACC provides. She said that they try to encourage their providers to get additional education that way. She said that they have access to laminating, die cuts, and other classroom materials. She said that the Children's Center of Utah has a wonderful program where they go out right to the classroom and they can evaluate behavior problems or emotional problems or trauma, and they can help mitigate that and help the parents to more resources as well.

She explained that where the CACC specialists come in is the Utah's Child Care Quality System, which is CCQS. She said that Utah adopted the CCQS system just in the last few years. She said that our program wants to make sure that even kids in rural areas, or kids of

a lower economic status could have access to top-notch childcare, so our program has our specialists go out.

The CCQS covers a whole bunch of series of items that they look for, but they look at health and safety practices, interactions between teachers and children, cognitive development. They look for how many toys they have, and if the kids have access to the toys, or are they up on the shelf where they can't get to them, and stuff like that? She said that the childcare programs that embrace the system are scored and given a rating from building quality at the lowest and high quality plus at the higher end. She said that we do have a lot of programs that score high quality in our service areas. She said that the CACC CCQS specialists help with the documentation, with the application process, and other technical assistance for that. She said CACC has specialists to do observations, going into the classrooms and checking off what they're seeing. She said that CACC also does peer learning communities, where they'll have mostly at least family providers within these, and they'll have six or seven family providers where they can bounce ideas off of each other. She said that they make goals for themselves. She explained that with CACC intensive coaching, the specialists will go right to the center or family program, and they will set goals with them. She said that they will have trainings with them and help them achieve those goals, so they do a lot of work.

She said that they do an early childhood conference, and this year it's April 19th and 20th at Utah Tech University. She explained that during COVID they did two separate events and followed COVID protocols, so they did one in St. George and one in Richfield, and they separated everybody. She said that it has only gotten bigger since then and last year they had about 300 participants. She said that they had about 30 instructors doing breakout sessions, and then had another more than dozen doing vendor tables and other information. She said that they then did a Friday night leadership for directors, owners, admin, and went through things like staffing, business practices, because owning a child care is a business, even if you're a family provider.

She said that one highlight of the conference last year was to tell providers how they can take learning outside. They taught how to do math outside and how to do reading outside. She said you don't just have to go outside and say, okay, go play. She said that they taught how to do intentional teaching outdoors, so that was fun. She said that this year's conference that they are doing, the theme is "Outer Space", but they are doing all the hard kind of special topics, special needs, autism, trauma, emotional, things like that, so that'll be really good.

Mr. Zabriskie said that we were excited that Melissa was willing to be the guinea pig for the first one of these presentations about our programs. He said that this is something, through the rest of this year, that we are going to have, during our Steering Committee meeting, that I have called: "*Did you know*". He said that most of the time, we do all these programs from behind the scenes, and they are taking care of things that you didn't know we were doing. He said he hoped everyone knew a little more about Care About Childcare now. He hoped that by the end of this year, most of the Five County AOG programs will have come in here and explained a little bit of what they do, so that the Steering Committee will know.

The Chair thanked Ms. Brown for her presentation.

VIII. Utah Congressional Briefing (August 12-14, 2024) Update.

Commissioner Jerry Taylor provided an update on the Utah Congressional Briefing being planned for August of 2024. He explained that we bring scholarship money to bring staffers from across the aisle, about 20 staffers from D.C. and we take them starting in Salt Lake and travel through the state of Utah. He said that they talk about wildfires, about public lands, watersheds and forest restoration. He said that they start on Sunday and end on Thursday morning. He said the purpose of the briefing is to educate the staffers. He said that they put them on horseback, they have them shooting guns, riding on ATVs, etc.

Commissioner Taylor explained that not only do they bring Congressional staffers out here, but NACO, which is the National Association of Counties Officials organization, for the last three years, we've had the president of NACO out here with some of her staff. He said that the briefing really helps educate the people. He said that you really don't know what it's like until you really walk in somebody else's shoes, and that's what they've tried to do, is to bring them out here, and educate them. He said that it's funny that at one point on the trip last year they all stopped at Redmond Salt. He said that one of the things they do at Redmond Salt is they have a target range where you get to shoot rifles. He said that you don't just shoot at targets there, you shoot at dynamite. He said that it was funny, because nobody really wanted to shoot until one little gal stepped up and shot, and the minute she hit the dynamite with the first shot, everybody lined up. He said it was incredible. He said that they then took everyone down in the mine and showed what they do and how they take care of the salt and everything. He said it was incredible. It was mentioned that these were actually staffers, many of whom are the people writing all of the bills, the people helping make all the policy. Commissioner Taylor said that one gal had lived in New York her whole life, and she'd only lived in New York and D.C., never been to the west and didn't even know there was still open country, because she had seen it on movies, but didn't really know this really existed. He said she was thinking overpopulation, and the world's like that everywhere, but she learned that it's not. He said that it was a huge eye-opening experience to hear that from her.

After some technical difficulties, a video that was produced during the 2023 event was shown to the Steering Committee.

The Chair thanked Commissioner Taylor for the update.

IX. Discussion on the Role of Associations of Governments in Housing.

Mr. Gary Zabriskie, in his role as Director of Community and Economic Development, led a short discussion on the role of associations of governments in housing. He asked if anyone knows of Wilf Sommerkorn. He explained that Mr. Sommerkorn is very active in the Utah Chapter of the American Planning Association and Mr. Zabriskie said he put his bio in the packet so you can read that anytime you want to. He explained that Wilf has kind of been our ears to the ground or to the track or whatever you want to call it for what's happening at the legislature each year that affects planning, affects cities and counties, and all that kind of stuff. Mr. Zabriskie said that housing right now is the biggest issue that they have, and the governor keeps bringing it up, and everyone else keeps talking about it. That issue is

affordable housing, and the lack of it. Mr. Zabriskie said that he has a concern with possible legislation and that is why he put in Mr. Sommerkorn's blog entry from last week. He explained that there was a committee that had come up with some recommendations, and this came from Envision Utah, so if you know anything about Envision Utah, it's not necessarily reflective of rural Utah, but one of the recommendations concerns was education. He said that the way it was presented was for seven recommendations for the "state and regional associations of governments". Mr. Zabriskie said he didn't like the way that they lump those two together so people think the state of Utah and local "associations of [local] governments" are the same thing as the state. Mr. Zabriskie reminded the Steering Committee that associations of governments like ours were established by you, by the cities and towns, and the counties, and the school districts, in our region. He said that if you look at why the articles of incorporation of this organization came about is so that you could discuss items of mutual concern such as on federal actions and have discussion on them and make policy decisions, and that's what you do. He said that this is truly local government at its best because you are all local government getting together and discussing things. He reiterated that the Five County Association of Governments was never set up as a "super government" or a "regional super government" above the counties, and above cities and the towns. He said we are an organization that you formed to help you do your jobs better and to do things with a common organization do it for you. He said that the Association is similar to what you did with the Southwest Utah Public Health Department and Southwest Utah Behavioral Health, so you don't have a behavioral health in each county with their own department and everything, managing that. He said there are clearly defined things of what the Association of Governments does. He said one of the recommendations was educating the public about the need for more housing, which Mr. Zabriskie said was fine, we can do that, and develop materials for training local officials. He said another recommendation was to analyze and address non-zoning barriers. Mr. Zabriskie said we could look at your zoning ordinances and do that kind of stuff. Mr. Zabriskie then expressed his biggest concern was if the state Legislature gives more of a role to the associations of governments in the state to somehow regulate, or to tell you you're not doing it right, or those kind of things. He reiterated that we are not a super government, and we shouldn't be doing that. He said that determination should be by your own towns through your own town's attorneys determining whether you comply with ordinances or not. He said his biggest concern is if they want to make the role of the association of governments to do additional stuff, then they should put their money where their mouth is because we are about stretched as far as you can with the number of staff that we can afford to hire with the grants that we receive now.

Mr. Zabriskie said that if there's another major thing added to us, we would need more funding. He said his concern he has is that if they want to put additional roles on the AOG that this board would be supportive of letting their legislators know, if as a state, they want us to do more as staff, we're going to need more funding and more staff, because we can only do so much. Mr. Zabriskie said this is the same as you have in your own cities, towns, or counties, and you bring on a new thing, you've got to hire somebody to do it. He said that he is just bringing this up as a concern. He said that his biggest concern wasn't on education, because we're good at doing technical assistance and training and that kind of stuff. His gravest concern is if they plan on making or proposing something where we, as an Association, would take on a regulatory role because that's not in our bylaws. He said that

we don't do regulation, we're not a taxing entity and we are also not a regulating entity. He said that we are not like the health department where that's a mandate of theirs where they go out and they cite somebody for not having proper sanitation and things like that. We don't have that ability through us. Mr. Zabriskie said he just brought this up and thought I'd read it and maybe just follow this housing issue and just know how it could potentially affect this organization, because you, the Steering Committee, are this organization. He said that's all he had on it.

A comment was made by Mayor Billings that government doesn't build houses, that it's the private sector, and they are choosing not to build, because of what? Interest rates? Because of cost of building? Because of the high cost of land? She said that it's not because they are not doing the things that they need to as a city, as they have already done those. She said that when they talk about high density, their city has already provided for many high-density places, but they just haven't built them. She said that it's not something that the government can control. She said that it's kind of coming in and saying, hey, you're asking for something that's not under our control, and then you're giving us another something saying, hey, well, it's not working. What's not working? She said that they have already done all of those. She said that most all of the cities that are on board with this saying we don't agree. Some additional random comments were that they're trying to force a free market. Another comment disagreed with the state taking our tax dollars and giving people money to put in homes. Another said we do need affordable housing, but sometimes that's up to families to figure that out and help kids and do those things.

The Chair thanked Mr. Zabriskie for bringing up this issue and for the board member's comments and discussion.

X. Congressional Staff Updates.

Mr. Gary Webster, with Senator Mike Lee's office, started out the updates talking about affordable housing and said Senator Lee has the Houses Act which would affect in Utah many of our cities and towns that border BLM land or other federal land. He said Senator Lee believes that if there was a way to allow more homes or units to be built on current federal property that we should be able to make, or allow, for an increased number of units, and that is one of those ways to lower home prices and make more available. He said this would trade out that land to no longer be federal land, but incorporate it into towns and cities to extend their reach and increase the supply. He said it's that simple. He said that there is high demand, high prices, so he wants to increase the supply. He said that if the federal government or federal agencies would allow that to happen, and that's something that we want to see happen. He said that another issue that the Senator is paying close attention to is, of course, the budget. He said that with the funding situations and with the time expiring, they literally have a couple of dates that they are watching very closely. He said that January 19th was going to be the deadline for government funding for agriculture, energy, water, some military, and other issues. He said because of the extension, what we run under is continuing to kick this can down the road. He said that one of the things that Senator Lee has been pretty vocal about is he will not be able to fund additional government spending without a border closure solution. He said that he is going to stand firm on that, and watch closely for that. He explained that the other date is February 2nd,

which would be the deadline when other agencies were going to be funded and there are some challenges in that.

He said that another thing that they have been working on and will continue to push for is what we call the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny, or the REINS Act. He said that what they would like to see is to have unelected federal bureaucrats reined in, and it all starts with the Executive Branch. He said that this would help become a major rule that is proposed to hold back spending, and it would be about \$100 million, so any rule that exists that would affect the economy that much would then be put back to Congress so that they could help in determining how this money would best be spent. Other items besides that, we have reintroduced the SCRAPE Act to protect America's children from exposure in and out of pornography and prevent companies from profiting from underage viewers. He said that this is another one of those issues that the Senator believes the federal government should step in to and help protect our youth.

He said that on the local level they got involved with the Post Office in the town of Antimony. He said that the Senator's office recently sent a letter on behalf of the Senator to question the Post Office's integrity, or lack thereof, in how they manage some of these rural post offices. He motioned to Garfield Commissioner Taylor whom he mentioned was very familiar with the situation. He said that the Commissioner has been very helpful with that, and the Senator's office appreciates that. He said that their office is doing all that they can to address that particular issue.

Commissioner Taylor said that the Postal Service has known since last June that they needed a new postmaster. He said that they started working on it at the end of November, once the postmaster finally said, enough is enough, she's retiring. Commissioner said she wanted to retire in June, but they wouldn't find her anybody to take over, and so she just had to walk away. Mr. Webster said that they are putting whatever pressure they can on that, and said that there are other rural post offices as well where some of their contractors are getting ready to retire, and he thinks they need to watch that closely. Additionally, in Miller County, there is a, I don't know how you address that, the cross tie. He also mentioned the public comment period that Representative Celeste Malloy was able to lobby to extend that through the BLM and is something they are also watching closely, because of the overreach of agencies and dealing with some of the ranchers and farmers not working and planning through the process. They want to see that go right through their property, which is something we feel would be egregious. He said they are hoping that they might be able to influence that somewhat. He said to feel free to get in touch with him.

Ms. Cindy Bulloch, introduced herself, and said she is now representing Congresswoman Celeste Malloy. She said that she was going to do kind of tag team, and introduced Ms. Tani Downing, the Congresswoman's District Director.

Ms. Tani Downing said she was really glad to be there. She explained she was formerly the city attorney for St. George. She said prior to that, she held various positions in state government, and worked for the State Legislature for a number of years. She said that she was the Governor's general counsel for a little while, and she ran two of the state agencies for the state, so she said she has been around for a while. She said that she was really

grateful to be at the meeting and really excited to work for Congresswoman Malloy. She said that she has only been on this job a little over a week, and was still waiting for her laptop and cell phone to arrive. She said that Ms. Bulloch's just arrived that day. She said they are super excited to get going. She gave her e-mail address to those at the meeting. She said they are open for business and are doing their best. She said that they are going to have caseworkers in the Bountiful office and in St. George. She said that Representative Malloy wants her district office to be down in St. George and to have more outreach in the rural areas. She said that to that end, she is opening up two additional offices, one in Delta, and one in Richfield. She said that Ms. Bulloch will go over and staff the Richfield office one to two times a week. She said that they are also going to be bringing on Mr. Scott Albrecht. She said that Mr. Albrecht was with Senator Mitt Romney's office, and he's going to be joining the team, and he'll be working the western side of the district, and going into help in that office occasionally as well.

Ms. Downing asked Ms. Bulloch to state what counties she will be working with. Ms. Bulloch stated that she will work with Sevier, Wayne, Paiute, Garfield, Kane and Iron counties.

Ms. Downing said she was just in Salt Lake and Davis County area and was with Representative Malloy. She said the Congresswoman had just come from the border, and was there with 65 other members of Congress. She said that you may have seen prior to the holidays in all the news media about the people trying to enter from the Mexico side, and they were trying to get through processing, and it was just backed up. She said it was like the most that they had seen in years, some 300,000, she thinks she heard. She said those 65 members of Congress, and the Speaker, decided to go down and see for themselves what was happening. She said that when they showed up there was no one there, and so they asked the locals and the federal law enforcement that were there, did you let them know that we were coming? She said they said no. She said so what that tells us is that the cartels that are on the southern side of the border have great intel, and they know what's going on, and they didn't want there to be a story when the news media came with Congress to the border so somehow all the people disappeared. She said that the stories, though, that some of the folks that they were able to talk to, the stories are horrendous. She said that what the cartels are doing and extorting the people who make it to the border, they're raping, they're exercising violence on these people. She said it's a horrible situation for the people who are coming there. She said that they are coming because it is well known that our border is porous and that they [the administration] won't keep the border closed. She said that this is one of the things that the Representative feels really strongly about, and I know our delegation does as well, that we have got to be able to control the border, and who comes across it. She said that sovereign nations should be able to control their borders. She said that on the other hand, the country needs to fix the process for legal immigration to help us build the jobs. She said that they need to provide a path to not living in the shadows, to be able to contribute to society. She mentioned those kids whose parents came here illegally and they were born here, and they are being told they might have to go back to some other country that they have never been to before, or the parents being sent back. She said that those are all things that are very concerning to the Congresswoman. She said that the Congresswoman just had a meeting with someone from the federal judiciary because she is working to try and get a federal detention facility in Utah. She said that there are a lot of federal detainees in the state, and no place to put

them. She said that most all who have county jails know the burden that you have to carry by having these federal prisoners there, and when those get overcrowded, they go home. She also said that it is a 10 hour drive for them to go to court, one way, so the Congresswoman is working with the U.S. Marshal's office trying to get a federal detention facility in Utah. She said that the Congresswoman has had multiple meetings with the news media, and probably eight or nine meetings with the news media back-to-back, making herself available, explaining her votes, explaining her positions on things. That is one of the things that she feels strongly about, being transparent about what she's doing, making clear why she is voting the way that she is, and also telling the importance of the issues that are in the 2nd Congressional District. Ms. Downing said she was just passing along to the individual Steering Committee members how much she appreciates them and the collaboration that she has with them, and to let you know that her offices are open and her staff is available for everyone. Ms. Bulloch finished by updating the Board on a few more bills that had started in Congressman Stewart's office and were now being overseen by the Congresswoman's staff. The Chair thanked Ms. Bulloch and Ms. Downing for their update.

Mr. Kyle Wilson introduced himself and said that he represents Senator Mitt Romney. He said that there were a few legislative priorities that they are working on. He said that among them are TikTok and Artificial Intelligence. He said that they are working quite hard on developing a strategy to combat China's really aggressive posturing and attempt to take over the global economy. He said that China has everything from the Confucius Institute at colleges and universities here in the United States to really robust economic development programs in China, but we don't have a plan to combat that, and it's a legitimate threat. He said that is something they are taking seriously. He said that border security, likewise, is something that they are undertaking. He said that, additionally, Ukraine, Israel, and generally military funding and readiness is high on priorities. He said that they are working on some bills that would affect cell phone use by children in schools specifically. He said that those are a little bit in the rougher stages. He said that this is a Farm Bill year and that expires shortly. Mr. Wilson said that the Farm Bill, to him personally, is something that he is passionate about, so he really enjoys working on that. He said that Senator Romney along with Senator Joe Manchin introduced the Fiscal Stability Act, which he couldn't remember if he brought it up at this group's meetings before, but he reminded everyone that two-thirds of federal spending is compulsory and automatic, and this bill would create vehicles for the Senate to be able to evaluate those expenses rather than just cruise control towards bankruptcy because, he said frankly, that is where we are presently headed. He said that while I was sitting there, he read an email about the Antimony post office issues, and like Mr. Webster said, we've seen this in a number of occasions. He explained that a small post office will lose their contractor to retirement or for whatever reason, and the Postal Service doesn't look for a replacement very enthusiastically. He said that way they can say they can't find one, and shuts it down, and the community has to drive 20 or 30 miles. He said that for the Antimony post office, like Commissioner Taylor said, the Postal Service had ample time to find a replacement. The Postal Service indicated that they didn't have any applicants the first go-around, which everyone knows is perfectly false, but he said that's a conversation we're having currently. He said that he will probably follow up with that matter that afternoon and see if we can get the lights back on there as well. He moved on to another topic, the United States Forest Service, and said it was about a year ago, and said we may or may not recall, he was asking about definitions for old-growth forests, because

the Biden administration recently issued a directive to maintain old-growth forests, and that's kind of an ambiguous term. He said that it has the potential, as they see all too frequently, to be abused by activists. He said that they had a meeting with Forest Service yesterday. He said that they feel a little bit better about Ms. Mary Farnsworth's (the regional forest director) take on old-growth forest management. He said that she's a big proponent of active management, which is a win for those of us who understand ecology on the ground. He said that this matter is something they are watching closely, and he said he would urge everyone to watch it also. He mentioned the Dixie and the Fish Lake Forest revision plans, but because of the new old-growth directive, which will require an EIS, those forest plans are getting put on the back burner, for better or worse. He mentioned that Director Farnsworth said on the previous day that the biggest threat to old-growth isn't logging, it's fire, and she understands that. He said that they are hopeful, and said he does not know if optimistic is the right word, but at least hopeful that it will be managed appropriately. He talked about globalism and the Chinese takeover of our economies and things that directly tie into the BLM conservation rule, the natural asset companies, and using federal lands to deal with carbon sequestration and things like that. Is that on the radar? He said that carbon sequestration specifically is still in the wee stages of development, or so they want us to think that, but no, it's chugging along mightily.

He explained about FAFSA, the Federal Application for Student Assistance, and said that it is now going to start counting farm assets toward a student's eligibility for Pell Grants, which he said is absurd. He said that not only will it make such little difference, because farmers are such a small portion of the populace, but it's really going to hurt those people it affects. He said that there is a lot of naughty, but no nice in that one. He said that is something we're pushing back on really hard.

He said that he also had a meeting with the National Weather Service a couple of weeks ago and they talked about consumptive use of water in our watersheds. He said that essentially what they are trying to achieve there, because it's not happening right now, is the agencies measure consumptive use on the landscape using a static equation. He said that not only is it not a good equation, but it doesn't take into effect any nuances like vegetation treatments. He said that those vegetation treatments make a huge difference in runoff. He said that is something they are working on. He said that they want to see that data, and they want to see the difference it makes.

He said, lastly, and again could not recall if he brought this particular one up before, but the Bureau of Land Management is retooling their grazing manual, which effectively gives employees instructions, the range employees instructions, on how to manage grazing allotments. He said that because that is an inward-facing document, the Bureau of Land Management claims that it is not subject to NEPA, and so public comment won't be part of that process. He said that is something they are likewise leaning on the Department of the Interior really hard about.

He told everyone to let him know if there was anything they can do as far as casework, passports, pensions, anything. He said that the rest of the delegation staff is likewise awesome. He said to let their office help if anyone runs into one of the many potential problems dealing with the federal government.

XI. State Agency Updates

The Chair noted that there were no state agency representatives to make an update at that time.

XII. Universities and Technical Colleges Updates

Executive Director Bryan Thiriot indicated that Mr. Henry Walton, representing Utah Tech University, who was online via ZOOM video, had to leave. He said that Mr. Walton had to get on another meeting, and that he will catch up to the Committee next March. Mr. Thiriot said that Mr. Walton wanted to introduce, or highlight, their new interim president, Ms. Courtney White. He said that maybe what we can do in the March meeting is maybe have them come in on ZOOM and have both of them there.

XIII. Local Affairs Discussions, if needed

There was a healthy discussion about the need to meet face-to-face for the Steering Committee meetings. It was mentioned that before, and after, the Steering Committee meetings it allows one to meet face-to-face and discuss items, pull them aside, and discuss our concerns with them. It was also mentioned that once the legislative session is over we will again have the state legislators here to report on the session. It was mentioned that this is something that has always been really great. There was a short discussion on a business awards banquet that Six County AOG does each year, where each county picks a business that they want to highlight and give a plaque to at a banquet with formal dress. The discussion was that they get up and honor people that are making a difference within their counties.

It was also mentioned that Mr. Terry Hutchinson is replacing Mr. Burke Staheli as the Washington County School Board representative and has been on the Steering Committee before. Mr. Zabriskie explained that it's up to each school board who represents them on the Steering Committee each year, and there have been rotations before from our school boards. He also said mayors rotate from time to time. He said normally the rotation takes place if there is a change at the February meeting, but because the Steering Committee is not having a February meeting this year, it has been changed to the March meeting, so if there is any rotations, that is when they will take place.

The Chair asked Mr. Hutchinson, representing the Washington County School Board, who was participating via ZOOM video, if he wanted to say anything? Mr. Hutchinson said he was glad to be back, as he was on this committee for two or three years in his first term. He said that he was glad to be back to help take care of these issues. He said that he really enjoys these meetings and was sorry he was not there in person that day. He said that he always prefers to face-to-face meetings, so he said he'll see what he can do in March.

The Chair asked Mr. Curtis Barney, representing the Garfield County School Board, who was participating via ZOOM video, if he wanted to say anything? He said that no, he didn't have

anything to add but said that he guessed he needed to repent and make sure he is there in March.

Iron County Commissioner Paul Cozzens mentioned another meeting he had with Senator Mike Lee's office. He said that he may have mentioned this already once, but Senator Lee's office facilitated a call with the V.A. and the Southern Utah Veterans Association. He said that they have got a developer that is probably looking at donating 17 acres of land that's got good freeway visibility for their PTSD center. He said that they have all rights for a Vietnam wall replica of the one in D.C. and an amphitheater. He said that they are looking to push that and raise the money. He said that he may have them come to this Steering Committee and present their ideas. He finished by saying that the Veterans Cemetery is under construction.

XIV. Adjourn

The Chair asked if there was anything else to discuss before she adjourned the meeting? The chair thanked Mr. Bryan Thiriot for lunch and wished everyone a Happy New Year. She then called the meeting adjourned.

These minutes were transcribed, typed and edited by Mr. Gary Zabriskie, Deputy Director at the Five County Association of Governments.

The minutes, in this draft form, will be presented for approval by the Steering Committee at their March 13, 2024 meeting.