

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL MILLCREEK CANYON COMMITTEE MEETING ON FRIDAY, JULY 7, 2023, AT 1:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICES LOCATED AT GATEWAY AT 41 NORTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE 102, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.**

**Present:** Tom Diegel, Chair

 John Knoblock

 Paul Diegel

 Del Draper

 Crystal Chen

 Katie Balakir

 Mike Christensen

**Staff:**  Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

**Opening**

1. **Chair Tom Diegel will Open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Millcreek Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

Chair Tom Diegel called the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. Those present introduced themselves, including Crystal Chen from Save Our Canyons. It was noted that Rusty Vetter previously attended Millcreek Canyon Committee Meetings as a member of the public but was recently approved as a member of the Stakeholders Council. Mr. Vetter wanted to officially join the Millcreek Canyon Committee. Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, offered to review the Rules and Procedures document after the meeting to determine the appropriate process.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the March 20, 2023 Meeting.**

**MOTION:** John Knoblock moved to APPROVE the March 20, 2023, Millcreek Canyon Committee Minutes. Paul Diegel seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

**FLAP Grant Discussion.**

Chair Diegel reported that the Millcreek Canyon Committee would discuss the Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) grant. He wondered if the Committee Members had watched the recording of the Open House or attended the in-person Open House. It was noted that several Committee Members had either attended or watched the video recording. Chair Diegel wanted to hear opinions from the Millcreek Canyon Committee about the updated design and Open House presentation. He wanted to send an email to the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance constituents soon.

Paul Diegel listened to the recording of the presentation. Something that jumped out to him was the idea that most bicyclists do not go above Elbow Fork so there will not be a bicycle path above there. He did not believe that conclusion was accurate. The road widths that were described made sense to him because there are some geologic challenges. However, if there are nine-foot traffic lanes at certain points, it would be possible to have nine-foot traffic lanes throughout. He reiterated that accommodations needed to be made for non-motorized users above Elbow Fork. As for the Parking Plan, it sounded reasonable to him. It was mentioned that construction would shut down during the winter months so the canyon could be open in the winter but the canyon would be closed for two summers. Mr. Diegel hoped there would still be some access allowed.

During the presentation, someone asked about speeds in the canyon. One of the Traffic Engineers stated that the speed limits would not be changed but earlier, it was stated that speed limits were operational and would be determined by Salt Lake County. Mr. Diegel believed that information needed to be clarified. He also felt that the operations needed to be considered during the design phase. The proposal of odd/even days had been discussed where motorists would be allowed to drive every other day. District Ranger, Bekee Hotze offered to look into that. Mr. Diegel hoped that the U.S. Forest Service would follow up and explore that possibility.

Chair Diegel reported that he spoke to Mr. Vetter recently about the FLAP grant and the presentation. Mr. Vetter attended the Open House and was pleased that there was an emphasis placed on environmental mitigation. The importance of the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) process was stressed throughout the presentation. The Open House highlighted the attempts to mitigate damage and improve the riparian environment. Mr. Vetter believed that the proposed retaining walls were a good idea but thought the walls proposed might be too high in certain areas. Thousand Springs was specifically mentioned as a sensitive area, which Mr. Vetter was appreciative of. He was able to speak to Ms. Hotze and the Project Manager about the Fehr & Peers Plan and the possibility of requiring reservations in the canyon. Ms. Hotze informed him at that time that the Forest Service was overwhelmed and under-resourced.

John Knoblock explained that he had looked at the presentation. He was pleasantly surprised that the feedback had been considered with respect to lane widths. That being said, he was not excited that the bicycle lane will end at Elbow Fork. Based on the presentation, there was a belief that it would be too expensive and there are too many obstacles to add the additional bicycle lane. He wanted to see a closer analysis of that and believed it was important for the Millcreek Canyon Committee to push for a four-foot bicycle lane all the way up the canyon. Mr. Knoblock discussed the retaining walls. Eight to 10-foot retaining walls are high but according to the Project Manager, the materials would blend in well with the environment. He had confidence that the walls could look good but wanted to make sure heights were minimized.

Mr. Knoblock wondered if it would be possible to have a cellphone repeater station put in on Murdock Peak rather than waiting many years for the second phase of the project. In general, he thought that the parking strategy was well thought out. It would be much better than having vehicles parked along the roadway. To have a real parking lot with restrooms and signage would contain the parking and also limit the amount of parking that could occur in the canyon. He felt that was a better solution than allowing haphazard parking on the side of the road. Additionally, he was supportive of the proposed improvements to the riparian zone. The overall direction was positive, but he reiterated that there was a desire to see a bicycle lane all the way up the canyon.

Del Draper did not think it made sense to stop the bicycle lane at Elbow Fork. He was pleased to see some recognition of changing road widths because that seemed to be an acknowledgment of environmental sensitivity. Reducing the road widths at certain points would be better for the environment. He was glad to see that there was some recognition of a shuttle as well. As for the parking, he believed the standalone parking lot was the best solution and agreed with the comments shared. However, he wanted to know if the plan was to add more parking stalls in Millcreek Canyon than currently existed. Mr. Draper referenced the cellular communication issue mentioned by Mr. Knoblock. He believed that needed to be done separately from the FLAP grant work. It was important to determine what was needed to solve the problem and then reach out to entities like Salt Lake County, Millcreek City, and the Forest Service to advocate for that work.

Mr. Draper noted that there had been discussions about trailhead improvements with restrooms and parking. He was under the impression that the FLAP grant funds could not be used toward restrooms and those types of trailhead improvements. He felt there needed to be some clarity about that. Mr. Draper did not feel it made sense to spend $19 million on the portion of the canyon where 13% of the vehicles went. He understood that would not change at this point, but expressed his frustration. Chair Diegel confirmed that it was initially stated that the FLAP grant work would focus on the road because there was not enough money to do the road work and other improvements. Now there seemed to be a shift and there were references to restrooms. He noted that more restrooms were needed in the canyon because of the increase in use, but there was conflicting information being shared. He offered to reach out to the Project Manager with questions. Additional discussions were had about the restrooms and the inconsistent information.

Ms. Chen reported that she attended the in-person Open House. It was her first exposure to the proposed design. Some of the Save Our Canyons concerns had already been expressed by Committee Members, such as the bicycle lane ending at Elbow Fork and the prioritization of motorized vehicles over other users of the canyon. In terms of the variable lane widths, one suggestion was to keep the width consistent at 18 feet, which could help reduce some of the impacts on the surrounding natural resources. One of the reasons there was a desire to have a wider road width was so shuttles would be able to pass one another. However, there might be a way for the shuttles to use some of the pull-offs that would be built and schedule the shuttles accordingly. Keeping the lane width consistent throughout would preserve the natural character of the canyon. In terms of the parking, it sounded like there would be a net addition of parking spaces in the lot. That was something that was a concern to Save Our Canyons as parking lots became formalized.

Mr. Diegel clarified that the Project Manager stated that there would not be an increase in parking. Mr. Knoblock understood that Carl Fisher had a lot of concerns about parking and creating lots. The Forest Plan had a goal not to increase parking in the canyon. That being said, the FLAP grant work would make it possible to eliminate the roadside parking currently taking place and build reasonable parking lots based on the existing numbers. He believed that the creation of formalized parking lots in the canyon would make it possible to limit the amount of parking taking place.

Chair Diegel noted that a number of references were made to the Rattlesnake parking lot. There were more parking spaces there now than there used to be. Though he supported fewer vehicles on the road, it was important to acknowledge current patterns of use. If there were going to be vehicles on the road, it was best to have actual parking spots available. Adding a few more formal parking locations was a positive solution in his opinion, but he understood that his position was not necessarily shared by everyone on the Millcreek Canyon Committee.

Mike Christensen expressed frustration about the FLAP grant process. The engineers that had been hired for the project continued to state that the goals were to increase safety, especially for bicyclists and pedestrians in the canyon, but widening lanes only increased safety for the drivers. It would cause the drivers to drive faster, which put bicyclists and pedestrians at a higher risk. He was not impressed that there would not be a bicycle lane above Elbow Fork.

Chair Diegel noted that the Millcreek Canyon Committee had previously written something for the CWC to consider. There was a desire to move the NEPA process forward for a shuttle bus before the FLAP grant process was done. This would allow the work to take place concurrently. Since that time, the Forest Service had stated that they wanted to move forward with NEPA before the FLAP grant project was done. Ms. Nielsen shared additional information about what had occurred. She reported that CWC Staff was continuing to work on a proposal. CWC Staff needed to have a proposal ready to present to the Forest Service by August 8, 2023. That was one day after the CWC Board Meeting scheduled for August 7, 2023. All of the Committee Members were invited to attend that meeting and provide feedback on the proposal. She would do her best to implement changes based on the feedback received from the CWC Board and Millcreek Canyon Committee Members. Once the proposal was submitted, the Forest Service would review it and determine the feasibility of pursuing the implementation of a shuttle in Millcreek Canyon.

If the Forest Service decided that it was feasible to have a shuttle, the CWC would contract for a NEPA analysis. Ms. Nielsen clarified that the CWC did not have the funding in hand for the potential NEPA analysis work. That was something that would need to be addressed in the future. She reiterated that CWC Staff was currently working on the Forest Service proposal. There had been discussions with shuttle companies to find workable parking areas for the shuttle and shuttle users. Ms. Nielsen noted that parking was the most difficult component of a potential shuttle. A lot would come down to outside funding sources for the consultant work and the parking options. Chair Diegel believed it made sense to move forward with the shuttle and figure out parking as time passed. Certain places might be appropriate for shuttle-related parking.

Mr. Christensen believed the intention was to have a shuttle that integrated well with existing transit. As a result, it would need to connect to the current transit lots. There were ways to expand what was already in place or contemplated. He clarified that he was referring to the Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) Park and Ride lot at 3900 South. Mr. Knoblock noted that the lot was not optimally designed and improvements could be made there in the future. Mr. Draper believed that the shuttle bus could potentially stop there so there was a connection to UTA services.

Ms. Nielsen reminded those present that when the Millcreek Canyon Committee was first formed in 2019, it was the Millcreek Canyon Shuttle Committee. There had been discussions with UTA at that time to determine whether there was support for members of the public to use their lots for a Millcreek Canyon shuttle. At that time, there was no support from UTA for that use. Mr. Christensen pointed out that just because UTA said no years ago did not mean that was still true. Immediately north of that lot, there was space available to expand the parking. However, there would need to work with the County to relocate the operations there. Mr. Knoblock reported that there had been discussions about that in the past, but nothing had moved forward.

Mr. Knoblock noted that parking in the canyons was a significant issue. In the Forest Plan, the current conditions were described as well as the desired future conditions. It stated that the desired conditions might change based on several different factors. That was important to keep in mind.

Chair Diegel noted that at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon, there were electronic signs that stated whether there was parking at Solitude and Brighton. It seemed that similar signs could work as a potential management strategy for Millcreek Canyon. For instance, an electronic sign that stated where parking was or was not available within the canyon. Though an electric sign might be a bit invasive, it could be helpful in terms of management and sharing relevant information. Chair Diegel believed it was important to determine how things would be managed moving forward. He acknowledged that the Forest Service was under-resourced and understaffed. However, at the in-person open house, Mr. Vetter got the impression that the Forest Service was trying as hard as possible to stay unengaged in the FLAP grant process. The County and the consultants were leading the work, but he felt it was important for the Forest Service to be engaged.

Chair Diegel discussed the lane widths. He explained that vehicles were six feet wide and large delivery trucks were typically eight feet wide. The lanes needed to be wider than vehicles, but to have a 10-foot lane was excessive. He believed the safety of bicyclists needed to be prioritized and there should be 9-foot lanes and a 2-foot bicycle lane. Mr. Knoblock reported that the legal minimum was four feet for a bicycle lane. The legal minimum for a new roadway was 10 feet wide. He had asked Ms. Hotze what would happen if the lane was nine feet. For instance, how that would impact a potential shuttle. Ms. Hotze stated that if the road was 9-feet in isolated areas, then the shuttle would still be permitted. Chair Diegel noted that this was not a hard rule. A few different websites stated that nine to 12 feet were appropriate in both urban and local areas.

Mr. Knoblock noted that the proposal was to have some portions of the road be 9-feet and some be 10 feet. That kind of variability might also be possible for the bicycle lane. When the bicycle shoulder was initially put in at the Winter Gate, it could not be four feet wide the entire way. The engineer made it four feet wherever possible, but in more expensive or difficult spots, it was two feet or three feet. Since it was not continuously four feet, it was not designated as an official bicycle lane. Mr. Knoblock suggested that this type of approach be encouraged beyond Elbow Fork. If some spots were too expensive for the four-foot bicycle lane, there could be a smaller shoulder in sections, with four feet wherever possible. If it could not be officially called a bicycle lane, that was fine, as long as there was something usable for bicyclists. Mr. Diegel stated that a two-foot shoulder would be better than having no shoulder at all. Additional discussions were had about bicycle lanes and the road widths that had been proposed for the FLAP grant work. Mr. Draper noted that 10-foot lanes were needed for highways, but this was not a true highway. The purpose of the road was to access the dead-end canyon for recreational purposes.

Chair Diegel reported that he would type a summary of the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting discussions that had taken place. That would be sent to Committee Members for review. He explained that time was of the essence and it was important for everyone to submit comments.

**Other Business and Updates Relating to Millcreek Canyon.**

There were no further discussions.

**Adjourn.**

1. **Chair Tom Diegel will Close the Public Meeting as Chair of the Millcreek Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

**MOTION:** John Knoblock moved to ADJOURN. Paul Diegel seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:40 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Stakeholders Council Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting held Friday, July 7, 2023.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_