

# Unified Economic Opportunity Commission Meeting Minutes

May 31, 2023 · 10:00AM – 12:00PM · Utah State Capitol, Committee Room 445

<https://utah-gov.zoom.us/j/86174369117>

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**Commission Members Present:** Governor Spencer Cox, Speaker Brad Wilson, President Stuart Adams, Commissioner Lee Perry, Mayor Dawn Ramsey, Ryan Starks, Joel Ferry, Margaret Busse, Sophia DiCaro, Carlos Braceras, Craig Buttars, Sydnee Dickson, Dave Woolstenhulme, Casey Cameron, David Damschen, Scott Cuthbertson\*, Miles Hansen\*, Ben Hart\*

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**Commission Members Excused:** Stephen Lisonbee\*

\* Non-voting member

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**Chairs and Presenters:** Sen. Ann Millner, Sen. Lincoln Fillmore, Sen. Luz Escamilla, Sen. Evan Vickers, Sen. Kirk Cullimore, Sen. Chris Wilson, Rep. Karianne Lisonbee, Rep. Robert Spendlove, Rep. Cal Musselman, Rep. Casey Snider, Ze Min Xiao, Byron Russell, Kori Ann Edwards, Kyle Palmer

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## 10:00 AM - Welcome and Opening Remarks, Commission Chair Gov. Spencer J. Cox

Gov. Spencer J. Cox welcomed everyone, saying that this meeting will be a substantive one. This is about the “big ideas.”

## 10:05 AM - Overview of UEOC Lifecycle and Timeline, Kyle Palmer

Kyle Palmer reminded the commission that the pacing of the working groups was changed this year to allow for more work during the summer months in preparation for the August UEOC meeting. This adjustment will ensure that the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget and other partners have everything they need to prepare items for inclusion in the Governor’s Budget. This is also more closely aligned with the Legislature’s interim schedule.

He shared the Ralph Waldo Emerson quote, “The only true gift is a portion of thyself,” and thanked all chairs and working group members for giving portions of themselves in these meetings (sometimes multiple meetings a week). He expressed appreciation for their efforts to get everything in place to prepare for today.

## 10:10 AM - Subcommittee on Talent, Education, & Industry Alignment, Sen. Ann Millner

Sen. Ann Millner informed the commission that Talent Ready Utah is focused on driving a strong economy in the state by identifying the two-four areas of highest impact each year. This process is data-driven. The top 3 results they saw from the pairwise analysis are as follows:

- Targeted workforce development in the Life Sciences
- Small business & training modalities in Cybersecurity: This could bring us to our heels

- Generative AI/Chat GPT: We need to teach students how to use this to benefit their future careers and the state of Utah needs to have leading AI talent. This is the next significant shift in our state. She asked everyone to think about generative AI and its potential role in solving healthcare challenges.

Gov. Cox wondered about Margaret Busse's involvement in the behavioral side of healthcare and Millner confirmed that those conversations are happening. He said that fixing structural barriers to this is critical. Millner said we have a chance to break through and fix behavioral challenges.

**10:20 AM - Subcommittee on Housing Affordability, Sen. Lincoln Fillmore & Rep. Stephen Whyte**

Sen. Lincoln Fillmore explained the changes in subgroups this year:

- Policy Subgroup:
  - Maximize & align existing tools
  - Shorten development approval and review processes
  - Increase supply of first-time new construction homes
- Funding Subgroup:
  - Analyze funding sources for ROI
  - Pursue ongoing strategic funding
  - Fund a Utah-specific study on adaptive reuse
- Data Subgroup:
  - Create a database of all affordable housing resources
  - Create a data-based affordable housing need projection model
  - Create a public-facing affordable

Gov. Cox said he is interested in the additions that both Colorado and Montana have made to Utah's housing solutions. He has been in touch with both governors and said he would be happy to make those connections if it would be helpful. Fillmore agreed that it would be helpful to have those conversations.

David Damschen said he is in regular conversations with housing finance agencies in other states. He will follow up with them.

**10:35 AM - Subcommittee on Women in the Economy, Sen. Luz Escamilla & Rep. Karianne Lisonbee**

Rep. Karianne Lisonbee informed the commission that new subcommittee members are talented and ready to get to work, especially concerning childcare. She presented the following priorities that have been discussed so far:

- Encourage workplace flexibility
- Promote re-entry into the workforce
- Increase access to childcare
- Study the wage gap and its causes
- Encourage wage transparency on job openings
- Foster social capital and support for women
- Support women's mental health

- Promote apprenticeships
- Address “benefits cliffs”

Gov. Cox agreed that the membership is amazing.

Edwards expressed thanks to Lisonbee and Sen. Luz Escamilla, who will serve as co-chairs under the new structure. We have doubled industry representatives, brought in trade, and made other important changes. This is a really powerful group.

**10:45 AM - Working Group on Government Efficiency, Sen. Evan Vickers, Rep. Robert Spendlove, & Marvin Dodge**

Sen. Evan Vickers said this group is diverse, with representatives from many levels of government and elsewhere. He presented the following:

- Analyze and optimize Boards & Commissions: narrow and reevaluate the current 400+ in the state
- Improve agency interactions with citizens: Create customer service training

Rep. Robert Spendlove presented the remaining items:

- Automate manual processes: Improve citizen experience
- Develop interagency data sharing: Avoid siloing, i.e. Utah County’s innovative solution to marriage licenses
- Incentivize government efficiency: Encourage behavior that we want to see using incentives
- Streamline government services from county to state level
- Encourage shared services among state and local governments

Gov. expressed excitement about this work, specifically mentioning interagency data sharing. The impact this will have on the small business community especially will be significant.

Commissioner Lee Perry said he appreciates this as well. He has seen a few examples of shared services and would like to see more. He said the state’s reach exceeds that of counties, meaning that counties need those resources from the state.

Joel Ferry said this is a priority for his department as well. He looks forward to implementing these things as they develop. He emphasized that it will be critical to be able to share information between agencies.

Busse asked about the relationship between this work and the development of the citizen portal. Vickers said he is not sure, but he can ask. He confirmed that there is a member of DTS on the working group.

Spendlove quoted Speaker Wilson in saying that since Utah is already on top, we are simply sharpening the saw. The working group has not found any serious problems; it has only found opportunities to improve. Gov. Cox agreed with this sentiment, saying that we want to have a culture where we view our role as helping people to comply

instead of trying to catch them not following the rules. This is a small but important mental shift. The difference in the private sector is that if staff treat customers poorly, customers can go somewhere else—but there is no other Utah government. That means that we are competing with other states, which is a really high bar.

**11:00 AM - Working Group on Water, Energy, & Natural Resources, Sen. Scott Sandall, Rep. Casey Snider, & Joel Ferry**

Rep. Casey Snider reminded the group that, although we had a good rain and snow year, one great year does not dig us out of the hole of several bad years. The state will continue investing in water conservation and infrastructure.

Snider presented some of the water priorities that the group is narrowing in on, including: aligning state agencies, encouraging conservation, and learning from international partners.

Ferry thanked the legislature for their work around water policy last year. Even with those great efforts, and with the phenomenal snowpack, Utah has more to do yet. Ferry said that we still need to focus on how we utilize our water, because it will have the largest impact on future growth. We are heading down the road to conflict between current water users and future users.

Speaker Wilson discussed efforts and commitments around water conservation and asked what the group's strategy is around agriculture.

Snider asserted that we need to recognize existing water rights and continue incentivizing conservation.

Ferry agreed that we can both support agriculture and use less water. He discussed how new technologies—including drip irrigation—can help us use water more wisely.

Speaker Wilson emphasized that there's no group that's been a better partner in water conservation.

Perry discussed the flooding that we encountered this year where new developments were built around drainage. He suggested that we better consider historic drainage when doing community planning.

Commissioner Craig Buttars agreed with incentivizing water savings, stating that when agriculture is given the opportunity, they do better with the resources that they have.

Scott Cuthbertson added that there is an appetite from private industry to contribute to water conservation.

Ferry discussed new efforts to actively manage our watersheds.

Ferry summarized Utah's history of energy, and the ongoing energy transition. Ultimately, he stated that nuclear energy has been identified as a top priority as the state looks to replace some of the traditional coal and fossil fuels. Overall, Ferry cited the group's desire to maintain affordable, reliable, and dispatchable energy. If Utah is going to continue to grow, Ferry stated that it will need to do more than live off the useful life of existing infrastructure, and instead make new energy investments.

Gov. Cox underscored the need to bridge the gap as we transition, including bridging the human gap. He emphasized that we must make sure people don't get left behind as the transition occurs.

**11:15 AM - Working Group on Growth & Transportation, Sen. Kirk Cullimore, Rep. Calvin Musselman, & Carlos Braceras**

Braceras discussed advancing electrification of the entire transportation system, and how this is a key transition for transportation.

Braceras also discussed the importance of increasing transit ridership. Transit will become especially fundamental to our quality of life, as there's only so many more lanes we can add. We don't want to force transit, but we do want to create a situation where it is the preferred mode of travel.

Braceras also discussed the declining gas tax revenues as we move toward electrification. The group is looking at moving more quickly toward a road usage charge program. This may also include different prices based on what time a person is driving.

Braceras talked about gradually expanding UDOT's capacity to outsource work. This idea is to give consultants and contractors more regularity and reliability in construction projects, avoiding the "sugar rush" of large bonding and projects.

Continuing last year's effort, Braceras discussed secure state infrastructure bank funding for greenfield development. This will help with the expenses around greenfield development.

Braceras reintroduced Limited Infrastructure Districts (LIDs) which is another effort from last year. The group hopes for a continued conversation from last year on LIDs. This would help develop more housing and development for our growth.

Braceras discussed the importance of supporting rural infrastructure. Rural areas have significant impacts based on growth and visitation, and even with last year's efforts, there is still more to be done to provide support for rural counties and cities.

Braceras also discussed creating a comprehensive study. The idea around this study would be to look at the growth Utah is experiencing, where we want to grow, and see what the market is able to produce. For example, the market may be able to produce a six-story development today, but it may make more sense in the future for that

development to be double the size in the future. This study would look at things from a supply and a demand side.

Braceras discussed the group's priority to advance the transportation system. This includes having vehicles communicate to traffic systems, vehicles communicate with other vehicles, etc. The working group is working to advance these concepts and create a comprehensive transportation system.

On a related note, Braceras stated that because the large majority of Utah's traffic signals are connected in the same system, Utah has an opportunity to be the place for new transportation innovations.

Braceras discussed the group's broad goal to better align our policies. As we make policy decisions, we should try to understand the implications across all the public areas.

Rep. Musselman emphasized that we need to find ways to anticipate the free market growth and, in the process, make sure the decisions being made are congruent with what the market will produce.

Braceras emphasized the efforts around transit oriented development, stating that we have to look a little broader than existing transit stops, and that we need to systematically create densities.

Lastly, Braceras underscored the importance of transportation safety. This working group will also look at things that will help us do more to save lives.

Ben Hart discussed rail, and how much of our road capacity is hidden in plain sight. By moving freight to rail, we can help with our air quality, rural economies, and road capabilities.

Braceras agreed that the state has a lot of need to move freight to rail. He also highlighted the "Guiding our Growth" survey, available at <https://guidingourgrowth.utah.gov/>. Braceras asked that we all push out the survey, as it will inform decisions by the state.

Busse asked how transit, autonomous vehicles, and freight might impact fatalities in the state.

Braceras answered that all three of these will help improve safety. While Utah is below average on fatality rates, having more people use transit, more freight, funding active transportation, will each help make a difference. Autonomous features/driver-assist features will also help decrease fatalities.

Before needing to leave the meeting, President J. Stuart Adams stated that Utah has the best DOT in the country, and that Utah is the best state for business. He discussed how the issues being discussed at the UEOC impact his grandchildren's futures.

Mayor Dawn Ramsey discussed the WFRC's Regional Transportation Plan and how it takes into account economic development, housing, jobs, etc.

Gov. Cox agreed with Ramsey and encouraged people to check out the website.

### **11:30 AM - Working Group on Technology, Innovation, & Investment, Rep. Jefferson Moss, Sen. Chris Wilson, & Ryan Starks**

Sen. Chris Wilson shared priorities from the working group. These priorities include:

- 1) Developing policies around A.I. This item includes considering data privacy, ensuring that the workforce talent is ready for A.I. disruptions, supporting positive use of A.I., and protecting users and consumers from negative impacts surrounding A.I.
- 2) Analyzing additional data around the Department of Commerce for resources, grants, etc.
- 3) Protecting Utah's data privacy
- 4) Inviting innovations in drug development and medical devices
- 5) Creating industry hubs
- 6) Attracting innovation through immigration. This includes recruiting and retaining international students, expanding foreign credentialing, making it easier to access programs, and creating a soft-landing spot for immigrants.

Ryan Starks discussed the value of the UEOC, where leaders at every level come together. He also thanked everyone for their involvement.

Ramsey discussed the UEOC efforts from the cities' perspectives. She asked that we allow cities time to implement policies before changing them significantly. She also shared priorities from the cities' perspectives.

#### **Motion**

*"I move that the working groups and subcommittees continue to explore the priorities as presented."*

- Motion: Mayor Dawn Ramsey
- Second: Speaker Brad Wilson
- Motion passed unanimously

### **11:45 AM - Multicultural Economic Empowerment, Ze Min Xiao & Byron Russell**

Byron Russell discussed the history and the efforts from the multicultural economic empowerment legacy working group.

Ze Min Xiao presented the report from the multicultural economic empowerment group. This report is meant to inform both the public and private sectors in Utah. The recommended strategies include:

- 1) Enable and Mobilize an Untapped Workforce
- 2) Support Small Businesses
- 3) Reduce Barriers to the Financial System
- 4) Create Intergenerational Wealth Pathways through Home Equity
- 5) Build and Sustain Healthy Neighborhoods
- 6) Prevent increased homelessness by stabilizing Low-Income Renters
- 7) Collect and standardize Disaggregated Data
- 8) Integrate Language Access in Service Engagement for Improved Customer Experience
- 9) Strengthen Community Input and Representation
- 10) Launch a Community-Driven Innovation and Thriving Fund

### **Motion**

*“I move to praise the work of the Multicultural Economic Advancement legacy group with the UEOC’s appreciation. I further move to publicly release their recommendations and subsequent report.”*

- Motion: Margaret Busse
- Second: Ryan Starks
- Motion passed unanimously

Hart emphasized the importance of multicultural work. During the pandemic, we learned to bridge the gaps between cultures. He discussed the unique nature of the UEOC.

Gov. Cox praised Xiao, Russell, and Peña. He said he looks forward to the full report.

### **11:50 AM - Approval of Minutes**

#### **Motion**

*“I move to approve the April 12, 2023 meeting minutes of the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission.”*

- Motion: Mayor Dawn Ramsey
- Second: David Damschen
- Motion passed unanimously

### **11:55 AM - Concluding Remarks: Governor Cox, Speaker Wilson, President Adams**

Gov. Cox recognized Miles Hansen for his work with the World Trade Center.

Speaker Wilson also thanked Hansen for his work. He also thanked everyone for their investment in this process, stating that this is a unique process across the nation.

### **12:00 PM - Adjourn**

Motion: Speaker Wilson