

# Five County Association of Governments

1070 West 1600 South, Building B  
St. George, Utah 84770

Fax (435) 673-3540



Post Office Box 1550  
St. George, Utah 84771

Office (435) 673-3548

**[APPROVED ON APRIL 12, 2023]**

## MINUTES

### FIVE COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

#### STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2023 at 1:30 P.M.

**MEETING HELD AT: FESTIVAL HALL; COMBINED ROOMS 5&6; 105 N. 100 E., CEDAR CITY, UTAH.  
MEETING WAS ALSO BROADCAST TO THE PUBLIC VIA A ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE.**

#### **MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Commissioner Celeste Meyeres  
Commissioner Gil Almquist  
Commissioner Wade Hollingshead  
Commissioner Paul Cozzens  
Commissioner Jerry Taylor (via ZOOM video)  
Hurricane City Mayor Nanette Billings  
Escalante City Mayor Melani Torgersen  
Cedar City Mayor Garth Green  
Town of Orderville Mayor Lyle Goulding  
Tyler Fails  
Burke Staheli  
Lauren Lewis  
Lisa Livingston (via ZOOM video)  
Curtis Barney (via ZOOM video)

#### **REPRESENTING**

Kane County Commission  
Washington County Commission  
Beaver County Commission  
Iron County Commission  
Garfield County Commission  
Washington Co. Mayor's Representative  
Garfield County Mayor's Representative  
Iron County Mayor's Representative  
Kane County Mayor's Representative  
Beaver County School Board  
Washington County School Board  
Iron County School Board  
Kane County School Board  
Garfield County School Board

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Bryan Thiriot  
Gary Zabriskie  
Allison McCoy  
Kim Cooper  
Cindy Bulloch  
LaRene Cox  
Heath Hansen  
Kyle Wilson  
David Busk  
Don Albrecht  
  
Marion Bentley  
  
Taylor Stevenson

#### **REPRESENTING**

Five County AOG Executive Director  
Five County AOG Deputy Dir./Chief Technology Officer  
Five County AOG Chief Financial Officer  
Five County AOG Community Action Program Director  
Congressman Chris Stewart  
Congressman Chris Stewart (for Washington County)  
Senator Mike Lee  
Senator Mitt Romney  
Utah Department of Workforce Services  
Director, Western Rural Development Center,  
Utah State University  
ASAP Coordinator, Western Rural Development Center  
Utah State University  
Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear, INL

BEAVER

GARFIELD

IRON

KANE

WASHINGTON

**AGENDA ITEM I. Welcome by the Chair.**

At 1:30 p.m. Kane County Commissioner Celeste Meyeres, Steering Committee Chair, acknowledged that there was a quorum of members present, and welcomed everyone to the Five County Association of Governments Steering Committee meeting for March 8, 2023.

**AGENDA ITEM II. Pledge of Allegiance.**

The Chair recognized Mr. Burke Staheli as a new voting member on the Steering Committee, who is a Washington County School District Board member designated by their Board to serve on the Five County AOG Steering Committee, replacing Ms. LaRene Cox. It was noted that Ms. Cox will continue to attend these meetings representing Congressman Chris Stewart for Washington County issues. The Chair asked Mr. Staheli to lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA ITEM III. Minutes – February 8, 2023 – Review and Approve.**

Following the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance, the Chair asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes in the packet, and if they had any questions, comments, or concerns, and seeing that there were none, called for a motion for approval of the minutes for the February 8, 2023 Steering Committee meeting.

**Commissioner Wade Hollingshead moved to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gil Almquist.**

The Chair, after asking for any needed discussion, and seeing there was none, called for a vote.

**The vote of the members was unanimous in the affirmative to approve the minutes as presented.**

**AGENDA ITEM IV. Utah Legislators providing updates on Legislative Session.**

It was stated by **Mr. Bryan Thiriot**, Executive Director at the Association, that time had been allotted for this region’s state legislators to provide updates on the legislative session that just ended, if any of them happened to attend the March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. He also explained that each of the legislators will be formally invited to attend the April 8, 2023 Steering Committee meeting to provide their report and update on the session from their perspective. Seeing that there were no state legislators present at the meeting, the Chair moved on to Agenda Item # V.

**AGENDA ITEM V. Biomass Grant Application.**

The Chair turned the time over to Mr. Bryan Thiriot, to briefly discuss this item. Mr. Thiriot explained that at the Steering Committee meeting last month, the Steering Committee members asked that a small group vet the Biomass Grant Program. He said that they looked into that in deep detail and learned that the program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development only allocated to the whole state of Utah only \$100,000 in grant funding. He said as they got more into the details, with the lack of sufficient grant funding available, the consensus was that the Association is not going to do it, and that is what Mr. Thiriot reported back to the Steering Committee.

## **AGENDA ITEM VI. Five County Regional Area Sector Analysis for Five County CEDS.**

The Chair turned the time over to **Mr. Don Albrecht**, Director, Western Rural Development Center at Utah State University. Mr. Albrecht was attending to present this agenda item with **Mr. Marion Bentley**. Mr. Albrecht explained that over the years they have had the privilege of working with many of those in attendance as they have done the ASAP (Area Sector Analysis Project) in all of the counties in the five-county region. He gave a bit of background for those not familiar with the ASAP process. He said that the ASAP program was developed in coordination with a bunch of universities from around the west and his job is to help coordinate rural economic development in 13 states around the west. He said that they have done ASAP in over 50 counties around the west from Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, New Mexico, as well as Utah.

Mr. Albrecht went through a series of PowerPoint slides describing the results of the data collection and surveys they had conducted for this ASAP project. He explained that they conducted surveys with about 2,600 people in the five-county region and with different industries and businesses from around the country. He said that when they interview businesses they try to find what the community has to offer them, they look at what benefits or costs they bring to the community, what kind of wages they pay, whether they hire locally, and what kind of skills they need. They also ask if they need to be near an airport, or need to be on an interstate highway? He explained that they take all of this information and run a matching process, which is not dissimilar to something like Eharmony.com, or similar human relationships matchmaking websites. He said that what they are doing is matching industries with communities. He said from that matchmaking, they help the community target certain industries in the short-term. He said that they also help the communities look at, in the long-term, what kind of assets and infrastructure they may want to improve so that they are in a better position for certain kinds of industries that they may want.

Mr. Albrecht explained that they had 624 survey respondents for all of the five counties and of that total, Washington and Iron counties had 377 surveys combined, while Kane, Beaver, and Garfield counties, had 247 surveys amongst them.

Mr. Albrecht turned the presentation over to Mr. Marion Bentley to go through the details of the survey results. He presented numerous slides and explained what they were telling the viewer. He explained that they had worked with Mr. Bryan Thiriot and his staff at the Five County AOG cooperatively during last fall, and said that they also worked with Qualtrics when they did the survey of all of southern Utah.

Following the presentation by PowerPoint, the presenters answered a number of questions and indicated that Mr. Thiriot would be given the presentation slides to e-mail out to all of the Steering Committee board members.

## **AGENDA ITEM VII. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.**

A. **Presentation on the CDBG Project Applications for FY 2023.** The Chair turned the time over to **Mr. Cody Christensen**, Associate Planner at the Association, and this region's Community Development Block Grant program manager. Mr. Christensen explained that it was the time of the year again to do the CDBG Rating and Ranking. He said that in the board's packet is a list of the applicants. He said that this year there were three eligible applications: Beaver City

application for city center and ADA improvements, Ceda City on Behalf of the Cedar City Housing Authority for property acquisition, and the town of Tropic for park improvements. He explained that this year's funding allocation was a little bit more than this region usually gets, and was about \$200,000 more. He said that because of that, the Steering Committee will actually be able to fund all three projects fully this year. Mr. Gary Zabriskie, Director of Community and Economic Development at the Association, explained that list in the packet was a non-prioritized list, with the projects simply listed alphabetically. He further explained that Mr. Christensen and Senior Planner Nate Wiberg went through the thorough Rating and Ranking process using the approved criteria that was adopted by the Steering Committee back in August. He explained that every August the next year's criteria gets adopted, and when all eligible applications are received by the deadline, the staff runs the projects through the criteria to see what their relative score is, and then put them in a numerical ranking by score with project number one, two, three, etc. He said that in many years there are more project applications than funding and if there had been more projects, they would go down the list all the way down through seven or eight or nine or whatever, and the funding would only be able to fund fully those projects down to where the money ran out.

**B. Discussion about and signing of Conflict-of-Interest Forms for the CDBG Rating and Ranking.**

Mr. Christensen then explained the need for each voting Steering Committee member present to sign a Conflict of Interest statement that states that the member has no financial or other ethical conflict of interest in approving the rating and ranking of the CDBG projects being reviewed. The forms were handed out for the members to sign.

**AGENDA ITEM VIII. Formal Rating and Ranking of FY2023 CDBG Projects by the Steering Committee in their role as the CDBG Regional Review Committee.**

The Chair again turned the floor over to Mr. Christensen. Mr. Christensen waited as Mr. Zabriskie handed out the prioritized Rating and Ranking sheet with the eligible projects prioritized in ranking by the rating score. He said that he didn't have anything else and turned the time back to the Chair who entertained a motion to approve this year's rating and ranking as presented.

**Commissioner Gil Almquist moved to approve the FY2023 CDBG Rating and Ranking as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wade Hollingshead.**

The Chair, after asking for any needed discussion, and seeing there was none, called for a vote.

**The vote of the members was unanimous in the affirmative to approve the FY2023 CDBG Rating and Ranking as presented.**

**AGENDA ITEM IX. Discussion and Consideration, by the Steering Committee in their role as the CDBG Regional Review Committee, of funding for an Iron County project under the CDBG Emergency Funding criteria.**

The Chair invited Mr. Christensen to explain this item. Mr. Christensen explained that staff had received an emergency application from Newcastle Fire under Iron County for a fire truck because the one that they currently have is unusable, so it leaves that area without fire protection. He said that the application is in the Steering Committee packet. Mr. Christensen also provided, in the packet, the criteria that is required for emergency projects. He said that they need a fire truck as soon as they can get one. He said that this funding, if approved by the Steering Committee, would

come off the top of next year's CDBG allocation to this region, which is anticipated to be between \$900,000 and \$1 million. He explained that this means that next year the amount this region would get would be reduced by \$350,000. Mr. Christensen said that it was his understanding that they could buy a fire truck right now, so it is not on a waiting list, because they have stock trucks available within three to five months. He said that Iron County can spend the money now and have that delivered. He said that his initial concern with this was can they spend the money as an emergency? He has been assured that they can spend it quickly and get that truck here. He said that when the idea was first presented to him, his initial reaction was that it was not a CDBG eligible emergency if they could not get a truck delivered for more than a year out. He said it was clarified by Commissioner Cozzens prior to the meeting that this is something that can be immediately addressed. He said that as it was initially presented, it could possibly be two years out, and if that were the case, it would be a hard case to make for that.

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the advanced use of this region's FY2024 CDBG funding to a project in Iron County due to an emergency need.

**Commissioner Gil Almquist moved to approve the advanced use of this region's FY2024 CDBG funding to Iron County due to an emergency need for the purchase of a fire truck by Iron County to replace a truck that has failed due to a cracked frame and severe electrical damage from a fire. The motion was seconded by Mayor Nanette Billings.**

The Chair, after asking for any needed discussion, and seeing there was none, called for a vote.

**The vote of the members was unanimous in the affirmative to approve the advanced use of FY2024 CDBG funding to Iron County due to an emergency need for the purchase of a fire truck by Iron County to replace a truck that has failed due to a cracked frame and electrical damage from a fire.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM X. Congressional Staff Updates.**

The Chair turned the time over for Congressional Updates.

**Mr. Heath Hansen**, with Senator Mike Lee's office, said that the Senate is finally doing something other than processing nominations. He said that the Energy Natural Resources Committee was holding their first hearing of this Congress the following day. He said that they would be examining issues surrounding the nuclear fuel cycle. He said that Senator Lee was going to be highlighting the need for more production of our domestic uranium and the sheer lunacy of federal mineral withdrawals which prevent us from processing our own uranium and keeps the U.S.A. reliant on unfriendly nations like Russia. He said that those will be the focus of Senator Lee's statements and questions the following day. He said that Senator Lee recently introduced a few pieces of legislation since the last Steering Committee meeting. He said one is called the Fair Removal of Existing and Enforced Bans on Immunization Relating to Destination (FREEBIRD) Act to end the COVID-19 vaccine mandate placed on international air visitors to the United States. He said that Senator Lee has said that it is having a severe negative effect on Utah businesses who do work outside of the country. Mr. Hansen said that Senator Lee has stated that President Biden has acknowledged the pandemic is over, so there is really no reason why the U.S. should still be requiring people to get vaccines into our country. He said that Senator Lee's bill eliminates that mandate. He said that Senator Lee and Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) introduced an amendment to the United States Constitution

requiring the federal government to balance its budget each year. He said that amendment would require that the federal government balance its budget and not spend more than it brings in. He said that another bill that Senator Lee sponsored, and he was a lead sponsor, along with 44 other co-sponsors, is the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act (CCRA). Mr. Hansen said that basically, if in your home state you are allowed to have a concealed weapon you will have those privileges in any other state that also allows concealed carry, and they must reciprocate that privilege. He said that the Senator is kind of trying to make it like a driver's license where a license to drive in one state means you are licensed to drive in any other state. He said the Senator wants to make that apply to concealed carry licenses as well. He said that the Cedar City BLM Field Office announced that they are going to be making some changes to the fee schedule at certain recreation sites in Iron and Beaver counties. He said that he reached out to both of those counties and they say they are on board with those. He finished by saying if there are any questions or concerns, they are here to help out.

**Ms. Cindy Bulloch**, with Congressman Chris Stewart's office, said she is the director for Congressman Stewart in this region and works in conjunction with LaRene Cox. She said at our meetings the Steering Committee will usually see the two of them. She explained that Congressman Stewart is on a couple of different committees, with a lot to do with defense, and that is taking a lot of his time and travel. She said that Representative Ed Case, who represents Hawaii's First Congressional District, came on the Five and Six County Congressional Briefing/Ride a couple of years ago and it has been a really good partnership. He said that Congressman Stewart and Congressman Case co-sponsored a bill and worked on a number of things. She said Congressman Stewart went to Hawaii to look at some of the natural resources and some of the issues that they have in Hawaii and came back saying that it is interesting how similar they are, even though they are on an island, and we have millions of acres here in Utah, how some of the natural resource issues that they are living through are the same. Ms. Bulloch gave kudos to Five and Six County AOGs for the Congressional Briefing/Ride and said that it is nice to see that annual event is making difference for specific legislation. She said that they are working on a number of different things besides just specific bills and are getting ready for appropriations. She said that many of those elected officials on the Steering Committee have submitted, or are in the process of submitting, for community project funding. She explained that they had a meeting scheduled right after the Steering Committee for those who were interested. She said that if anyone had questions to reach out to her or LaRene Cox. She said that the application process for those community projects is live, and entities can submit any time between then and March 15<sup>th</sup>. She said that in addition to the appropriation of the community project funding, the Congressman is looking at a bill to defund the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. She said that Congressman Stewart also co-sponsored a bill to require the declassification of "any, and all, information" related to the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic. She also said that Congressman Stewart is also working on his bill to ban social media for children under the age of 16.

**Ms. LaRene Cox**, with Congressman Chris Stewart's office for Washington County, said that Ms. Bulloch touched on most everything which is great. She said that Congressman Stewart is co-sponsoring a bill, HR 364, that is called the "Daylight Act" that would allow states to observe daylight savings time year-round. She said that some states already choose to observe standard time. She said that they are still working on the Search and Rescue Act that would benefit the rural counties. She finished by saying that Congressman Stewart is co-sponsoring another bill, "The Prohibition of Agriculture Lands for the People's Republic of China Act" to keep them from buying agricultural land in this country.

The Chair thanked the staff of the senator and congressman for their brief update reports.

The Chair then recognized **Mr. Taylor Stevenson**, who was not on the agenda, but was in the audience. He said that he was there at the meeting on behalf of “Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear”, which is a U.S. Department of Energy initiative housed at the Idaho National Laboratory. Mr. Stevenson explained that he has been talking to state and local policymakers and congressional staff. He briefly said that they are a federal program that is offering resources and access to the national lab who are talking about nuclear energy. He said that he is meeting with folks throughout the five-county region and just wanted to let the Steering Committee members know who they are. He briefly described the newer low-water use nuclear technologies being researched at the lab.

#### **AGENDA ITEM XI. State Agency Updates.**

There were no state agency updates, so the Chair moved onto Agenda Item # XII.

#### **AGENDA ITEM XII. Universities and Technical Colleges Updates.**

The Chair turned time over to **Mr. Henrie Walton** representing Utah Tech University. He said that he wanted to share some updates from the legislative session and some wins that the University received. He said that he wished the state legislators from our region were there so he could thank them publicly, but it sounds like they will be here next meeting. He ran through some of the items that were funded by the legislature. He said that the legislature funded a project so that the university can purchase an existing fire station that is adjacent to the Utah Tech University campus that is currently owned by the city of St. George, and the University will then be able to, once the city relocates elsewhere, use that facility for the University’s outdoor recreation programs and to store several of their our community outreach buses. He said that the state legislature also funds the Digital Forensics Crime Lab and provided some additional funding for that lab. He said that it was interesting that this lab has serviced 60% of all police and sheriff's departments in the state. He said that they have perfected a technology which allows them to jailbreak or break into locked laptops and iPhones and other technological devices. He said the University also received funding for their STEM outreach programs, which are designed to ensure that students are engaging in the STEM fields at a young age, and can get into those careers. He said that the University received funding for an innovative program that they are calling Innovation Labs, which is a partnership with state agencies. He said that was in the governor's budget, and it allows the University to partner with different state agencies to innovate and save money through a variety of different projects, modernizing software, and different programs like that. He said they are excited about that program. He said that it is an active learning opportunity for our students to work with different state agencies. He said that last, but not least, the Performing Arts Center of Southern Utah requested funding for a renovation of the Cox Auditorium, which is on the University's campus and the legislature funded that renovation. He said that they are excited about that opportunity. He finished by mentioning that on April 14<sup>th</sup>, the University is hosting a ribbon cutting for the Center for Precision and Functional Genomics and Congressman Chris Stewart will be one of the featured guests at that event. He said that they are really excited about this center, as it will house a variety of different programs, one of them being the Variant Science Training Program, which was funded in a community project funding request with the help of Congressman Stewart's office last fiscal

year. He said that is a program designed to train genomic specialists who will work in places like Intermountain Healthcare with Precision Genomics. He said that they are really excited about everything going on at the university. He said that they are focused on meeting the needs of the workforce in our region. He thanked the Chair for having him report and said he was open to any questions. Seeing there were no questions for Mr. Walton, and that there was no one there representing Southern Utah University, DixieTech or Southwest Tech to report, the Chair moved onto Agenda Item # XIII.

**AGENDA ITEM XIII. Local Affairs Discussions, if needed.**

There were none, so the Chair moved to the final agenda item.

**AGENDA ITEM XI. Adjourn.**

The Chair asked if there was any other business to address. Seeing there was none, she called the meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending and participating.

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

The minutes were approved by the Steering Committee at their April 12, 2023 meeting in Cedar City, Utah.