

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL MILLCREEK CANYON COMMITTEE MEETING ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 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

 Del Draper

 Mike Christensen

 Maura Hahnenberger

 John Knoblock

 Ed Marshall

 Carl Fisher

 Rusty Vetter

**Staff:**  Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

 Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations

**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 1:30 p.m.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the October 16, 2023 Meeting.**

Ed Marshall asked that some corrections be made to the Meeting Minutes from the October 16, 2023, Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting. On Page 5, Line 5, he asked that the name be changed to Russell Taylor. As for the motion on the same page, he clarified that he intended for the Committee to express support for his request. He asked that the motion language state: “Ed Marshall moved that the Millcreek Canyon Committee issue support for fire prevention in Millcreek Canyon by expressing its support for his request that the Forest Service remove the debris from a strip along both sides of Millcreek Road, in both the upper and lower canyon.”

Del Draper referenced line 43 on Page 3. He asked that the words, “for the consideration of a shuttle” be added. On Page 4, Line 38, of the Meeting Minutes, he asked that the name of the caller be identified, who was Jeremy Bell from the Crossroads of the West Council.

**MOTION:** Ed Marshall moved to APPROVE the October 16, 2023, Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting Minutes, as amended. John Knoblock seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

Chair Diegel reported that Rusty Vetter has started to work for Salt Lake City again. As a result, he is unable to serve on the Stakeholders Council or the Millcreek Canyon Committee. Mr. Vetter still had a desire to attend the meetings as a member of the public and could do so in the future. Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, explained that he could attend meetings and contribute to discussions, but would be unable to vote on items during Millcreek Canyon Committee Meetings.

**FLAP Grant Update and Discussion**

1. **Committee Members will Discuss the Ongoing FLAP Grant and Potential Parking Solutions for a Shuttle**

The Millcreek Canyon Committee discussed the ongoing Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) grant work and potential parking solutions for a shuttle. Chair Diegel explained that not a lot had happened since the last Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting. That being said, he pointed out that it was the end of November. Deputy Mayor Catherine Kanter previously stated that it would be possible to address the matter in late November or early December. He planned to reach out to her shortly and ask that the Millcreek Canyon FLAP grant be added to the agenda.

John Knoblock and Mr. Draper met with Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Engineers to discuss potential shuttle parking and the right-of-way issue. According to UDOT, as long as the shuttle parking did not cross the No Access line, there was support for parking on either the west or east side that had been proposed. Mr. Knoblock clarified that the west side location was adjacent to Skyline High School and the east side location was north of the glass recycling area. There had also been a meeting with the Public Works Director for the City of Millcreek, John Miller. According to him, both locations looked good, but a bit of work would need to be done. On the east side location, there was Upper District Millcreek Park, which had a water wheel and a monument to honor early settlers in the area. The northern part of that park was proposed to be used, which was beyond where the existing parking lot was. Since it was on UDOT land and was part of the interstate freeway system associated with the Federal Highways Administration (“FHWA”), if FLAP grant money went towards the program, that area could potentially be considered a 4(f) property. However, there was a de minimum impact exception in the 4(f) rules. Mr. Knoblock reported that a letter would be written and signed by UDOT as well as the Mayor of Millcreek, Jeff Silvestrini, to show that there were two feasible parking areas for the shuttle.

Chair Diegel thanked Messrs. Knoblock and Draper for their work. He asked for additional information from CWC Staff. Ms. Nielsen pointed out that parking was not the only issue raised by the U.S. Forest Service. She reported that CWC Staff met with the Forest Service on a monthly basis and could take the letter to them at the next internal coordination meeting. It would then be possible to determine whether there was still time to move the process forward. Ms. Nielsen reminded Committee Members that in addition to the parking issue, funding for the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) analysis and funding for the shuttle program also needed to be considered. She acknowledged that the parking suggestions were a significant step forward.

Mr. Knoblock asked if the CWC would provide funding for the NEPA work. Ms. Nielsen reported that the CWC did not have money immediately available for a NEPA analysis and would need to crowd-source for the funding. Mr. Knoblock believed that Bekee Hotze at the Forest Service wanted to know that there would be money available to establish and run the shuttle system. He asked what the estimated costs were. Ms. Nielsen stated that the cost estimates were included in the Feasibility Proposal that had been submitted to the Forest Service previously. She noted that there was an estimate of $1 million for the initial capital investment of ten shuttle vans.

Maura Hahnenberger discussed the Feasibility Proposal for the Forest Service. She asked whether the proposal anticipated that the Forest Service would run the Millcreek Canyon shuttle. Ms. Hahnenberger discussed the model that Wasatch Backcountry Alliance had in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon with their shuttle program. Ms. Nielsen clarified that those details were not finalized in the Feasibility Proposal, but it was her understanding that the Forest Service would not run the shuttle program. She believed the CWC or another entity would run the program. Ms. Hahnenberger pointed out that with the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance shuttle program, the organization did not own the shuttles, so there were different upfront costs. Chair Diegel explained that he was on the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance Board. For the shuttle service, Wasatch Backcountry Alliance had contracted with a couple of different entities. There was permission received from the Forest Service to run that program, but there had been some difficulties with shuttle stops outside of Solitude and Brighton. In terms of who would run a Millcreek Canyon shuttle, he did not believe the Forest Service would be interested in doing so.

Mr. Knoblock noted that Salt Lake County ran the fee booth and was responsible for dispersing those fees to the Forest Service as needed for their projects. Outside of State grants for funding, it would be possible to ask the County to fund the shuttle service. Ms. Nielsen wondered whether the suggestion was to ask the County to fund the shuttle through the canyon fee or through the fee to utilize the service. Mr. Knoblock thought both were possibilities. He noted that a lot of the fee booth money went toward the Ranger Program. Mr. Draper reported that Salt Lake County had previously offered $170,000 for the experimental shuttle that did not happen. He believed that showed some willingness on the part of Salt Lake County to be the funder of the project. Chair Diegel thought that was something to mention to the County as the process moved forward.

**Fire Prevention Discussion**

1. **Committee Members will Revisit their Efforts to Encourage the U.S. Forest Service to Use Funding to Clean Up Debris Along Millcreek Road.**

Chair Diegel noted that Mr. Marshall drafted a memo about fire mitigation efforts. Mr. Marshall reported that he spoke to the Deputy District Ranger, Scott Frost, three weeks ago. His initial impression was that Mr. Frost was willing to be proactive. Mr. Frost had looked into the question of whether the roadless area overlapped the roadway easement for the County. It was determined that it did overlap in some areas, but it was not supposed to. To clean that up, the matter would need to go back to Washington, DC. Mr. Marshall pointed out that if went back to Washington, DC, there would likely be a delay, and he had been pushing for the work to be done in the springtime after the snow melted and before the grass started to grow. That was when the debris was most visible. He suggested that the Forest Service use the same justification relative to the roadless area that was used in upper Millcreek Canyon for the fire work that had been done.

Mr. Frost was willing to look into that and liked the idea of creating a strip along Millcreek Road that was free of debris. He also wanted the area to be free of grasses. His main concern at this point was maintenance. Once the debris was removed, there would need to be some type of lawn mowing that occurred twice per summer. He wanted to speak to the County about that so they handled the work within their roadway easement area. Mr. Frost was planning to contact the County and suggested that Mr. Marshall contact him again in December for an update.

Mr. Knoblock shared names and phone numbers that might be relevant, including Dax Reid with the Department of Natural Resources and Geoffrey Whatcott with Unified Fire Authority. He believed both were involved in the similar work that had taken place in Big Cottonwood Canyon over the summer. Mr. Marshall thanked him for the additional information. Carl Fisher left a link in the Zoom chat box about mitigation work that had been done in the past. After the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting, it would be possible to review that information.

**Establishing Cell Phone Service in the Canyon**

1. **Co-Chair Del Draper will Discuss the Possibility of Establishing Cell Phone Service in Millcreek Canyon.**

Mr. Draper reported that he recently met with a retired Verizon engineer. He asked him what would be technically necessary to have cell phone service in Millcreek Canyon. If the Millcreek Canyon Committee could determine what was needed from a technical perspective, as well as the associated costs, it would be possible to have discussions with others. According to the retired engineer, he had been involved in cell phone service in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon. In both of the canyons, towers were not used, but fiber was run up the road. Each individual company is connected to that and put its own attachments to the fiber. It was unclear whether the brown towers in the canyons were related to the cell phone service or not. Something that had made the fiber possible there was that both UDOT and the ski resorts were supportive.

In Millcreek Canyon, there was not an extra push from the ski resorts for cell phone service. Mr. Draper thought that the FLAP grant planning should contemplate some sort of conduit in the ground. The FLAP grant already talked about some type of conduit to run communications cables through in order to potentially determine the parking stalls available. However, he wanted to make sure that the FLAP grant planning also considered a conduit that would make it possible to allow for cell phone service in the canyon. Not having service was a safety concern. Since there was a desire to have a Millcreek Canyon shuttle, it was even more important for there to be cell service.

Mr. Knoblock raised the point that more intermittent cell service would be less expensive. Mr. Draper reiterated the desire to have the preliminaries figured out in terms of the conduit and how cell service could be accomplished. Mr. Knoblock believed the conduit was supposed to be part of the FLAP grant. He wondered whether a letter should be submitted to request that cell phone service be considered at that time as well. Chair Diegel thought it made sense to do the work simultaneously. Mr. Draper noted that if the conduit was in there already, it would not be too difficult to come back later and add the fiber. However, he pointed out that the FLAP grant would only address the upper portion of the canyon and would not consider the needs in the lower portion.

Chair Diegel pointed out that there was limited communication with those associated with the FLAP grant work. It would be possible to request the conduit be installed, but he was not certain that the request would be considered. That being said, this could be discussed with the County. Mr. Draper suggested that a FLAP grant comment letter be drafted. He offered to work on the draft language. He was not sure whether the letter should be submitted individually or on behalf of the Millcreek Canyon Committee. He felt it would be worthwhile to submit a comment for consideration. It would also be beneficial to have a discussion with Salt Lake County.

Discussions were had about the best approach for the comment letter. Chair Diegel noted that he could submit the letter as an individual and Mr. Draper and Mr. Knoblock could be signatories. One way or another, he believed some sort of comment should be submitted in relation to the FLAP grant work. Mr. Draper reiterated that he would work on a draft letter following the meeting.

Mr. Vetter noted that he had made similar remarks in the comment he submitted about the FLAP grant. In a discussion with Ms. Hotze, he shared some of the history related to conduit in Salt Lake City. He shared information about microtrenching. Instead of putting in the conduit, a trenching machine that only went four to five inches into the roadway was used. A heavy-duty line was put in and it was possible to use those lines to bring Google Fiber to homes in the area. In his FLAP grant comments, he urged them to investigate this option and consider whether that approach made more sense. The reason that a conduit was desired in a city was to protect against problems from utilities and people cutting into the road. There was a need to protect the line. However, in the canyon, no one would cut into the road the way it was done in a city. Mr. Vetter also urged those involved with the FLAP grant to look at hot spots where people could access WiFi. Those were much less expensive than the installation of conduit. Since increased safety was one of the reasons for the FLAP grant work, improved communication was necessary. Mr. Vetter reiterated that there were several different alternatives that could be considered.

Mr. Draper noted that he had a conversation with Mr. Marshall in the past, who pointed out that Starlink was developing rapidly. There may be a point in the future where fiber is not needed in the road. He acknowledged that there might be other technological solutions to think about in the future. He liked the idea of the microtrenching that had been referenced by Mr. Vetter. He believed that would be more affordable than conduit and was something to be considered. Mr. Draper pointed out that the FLAP grant was intended to reduce congestion. Having proper communication would make it possible to reduce congestion within Millcreek Canyon.

Mr. Marshall reminded those present that the FLAP grant was focused on providing access to the canyon. In terms of approaching them about conduit, he thought it would be best to do so in a way that relates to transportation. For instance, the need to obtain information about parking availability. The approach taken would likely have an impact on the end result. Chair Diegel noted that safety had been emphasized in the FLAP grant proposal as well. Mr. Knoblock pointed out that the references to safety might be related to roadway safety as opposed to communication.

Chair Diegel asked whether there was any new business to discuss before the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned. Mr. Knoblock shared information about the 18-acre parcel of land that was for sale. He confirmed that the land had water. It turned out that the owner was family friends with the people who ran the Boundary Springs Water District, so water was available. There were three buildable parcels, as the zoning required 5-acre minimum lots. Mr. Knoblock thought it would be beneficial to speak to Wendy Fisher with Utah Open Lands so a strategy could be determined and an appraisal could be done to verify the price that could legally be paid for the property. There could then be discussions about potentially raising that money. Mr. Knoblock had spoken to the property owner and found out there had been several inquiries and a few lowball offers. Those offers had not been accepted, because the property owner was willing to wait until the right offer came in. Chair Diegel thanked Mr. Knoblock for updating the Committee.

Chair Diegel reported that the next Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting was scheduled for December 18, 2023. He would not be available at that time. If the Committee Members wanted to maintain that meeting date, then Mr. Draper could run the meeting. It was suggested that the Committee decide whether or not to proceed with the planned meeting in the next couple of weeks.

**Closing**

1. **Chair Tom Diegel will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Millcreek Committee Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Del Draper moved to ADJOURN. Mike Christensen seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:23 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Stakeholders Council Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting held on Monday, November 20, 2023.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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