

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL ECONOMY SYSTEMS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2023, AT 3:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICES, LOCATED AT 41 NORTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE, 102, SALT LAKE CITY UTAH.**

**Present:** Dave Fields, Chair

Morgan Mingle, Co-Chair

Nathan Rafferty

Ed Marshall

John Knoblock

Dennis Goreham

Patrick Nelson

**Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations

**OPENING**

1. **Chair Dave Fields will Open the Meeting as Chair of the Economy Systems Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

Chair Dave Fields called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council Economy Systems Committee Meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. He welcomed those present and explained that Committee Members and other participants could share comments during the discussions.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the October 31, 2023, Meeting.**

Ed Marshall referenced Line 33 on Page 4 of the Meeting Minutes and asked that the sentence, “He asked the Committee to think about actionable items…” be changed to reference Chair Fields.

**MOTION:** Ed Marshall moved to APPROVE the Meeting Minutes from the October 31, 2023, Economy Systems Committee Meeting, as amended. Morgan Mingle seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

**MOUNTAIN ACCORD REVIEW**

1. **Committee Members will Discuss the Mountain Accord and Its Relevance to the Current Economic Situation in the Central Wasatch, and Relevant Potential Updates to the Committee’s Goals.**

Chair Fields reported that the Committee Members were asked to review the Mountain Accord document ahead of the Economy Systems Committee Meeting. He noted that at the latest Stakeholders Council Meeting there was a review of the history of the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act (“CWNCRA”). That presentation was a solid reminder of the importance of the Mountain Accord work. Chair Fields asked the Committee Members to share comments about their review of the Mountain Accord. Co-Chair Morgan Mingle reported that she is new to Utah and the Central Wasatch community. As a result, she was likely the least familiar with the Mountain Accord process. After reviewing the document, she had a lot of questions. One had to do with economic development and how it relates to the transit systems. A lot of what was included in the Mountain Accord pertained to connecting economic centers in Park City to the Cottonwood Canyons and the rest of the Central Wasatch. Not much progress had been made on that front. She asked for more background information about what had happened.

Nathan Rafferty pointed out that the Mountain Accord process took place several years ago. He had forgotten that it all started with SkiLink. It had been a long process over many years. Chair Fields shared information about the connectivity discussions during the Mountain Accord process. There was a lot of interest back then in improving access to Park City from the Salt Lake Valley. However, it was shot down by businesses and the political leadership in Park City at the time. There seemed to be concern that Park City would become the base for the Cottonwood resorts. At various times, there were references in the CWNCRA about preserving transportation corridors between Park City and the Cottonwoods. From the ski resort perspective, there was an initiative called ONE Wasatch that had some energy for a little while, but that initiative did not ultimately move ahead.

John Knoblock reported that there was a point in time in the mid-90s when ski resort attendance was down and people were trying to ensure that the ski resorts had enough customers. The new pass systems had turned that around significantly and there seemed to be less concern about the numbers. Mr. Rafferty believed it had less to do with numbers now and had more to do with ownership of the ski areas. When ONE Wasatch was launched, there were seven ski areas in the Central Wasatch. Since that time, six of those seven ski areas had changed ownership, which impacted the movement. If the resort ownership continues to change, it might be possible for future connectivity discussions.

Chair Fields explained that some of the transportation solutions that had been studied through the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) process were now being considered for the Kimball Junction corridor. Mr. Knoblock mentioned the number of visitors to Alta that came from Park City. He was not sure whether that number was finalized through the UDOT process, but connectivity there might be useful to address the transportation issues. Co-Chair Mingle thought there was a seasonality component with Guardsman Pass being a seasonal road. That was by far the easiest connection from Park City to Alta. Mr. Rafferty believed a lot had to do with the snow years. Last year, the skiing was good at all of the resorts. The resorts that were higher, like Alta and Snowbird, did better in the low snow years, because people needed to travel much higher to find better snow for skiing.

The best data that Chair Fields had seen regarding people coming over was cell phone tracking data. Mike Maughan had commissioned a company to study that in the past. Though that data was a few years old now, there was some data out there about people who came to the area. Ms. Mingle thought there might be potential to utilize that technology more to better understand economic movement as well as the general movement patterns of people in the area. After reading the Mountain Accord, she felt that information about the workforce (workforce supports and impacts) was missing. She thought the document might have overcentered the experience of visitors and residents. It would make sense for the Economy Systems Committee to prioritize the workforce needs as well.

Dennis Goreham shared information about the Economy Systems Group outcomes. There was encouragement at that time to be a little broader. He explained that there were additional goals at different phases of the discussions, but those had been synthesized into the ones included in the final report. The first goal still captured the quality of life for residents and the quality of the experience for both residents and visitors. The three bullet points in the final version were chosen in an attempt to be broad enough that the economy-related goals could be captured and achieved. Chair Fields noted that the goals did not box in the Economy Systems Committee, but did not provide much of a roadmap either. Mr. Goreham noted that a lot had changed since the time of the Mountain Accord, so it might be beneficial that the goals were broader in nature. It meant those could be interpreted differently.

Chair Fields reported that he received a submission from someone unaffiliated with the CWC. It outlined their recommendation of what should be studied. For example, doing counts on Cottonwood Canyons ski amenities, downhill biking and other mountain biking, shuttle service, rock climbing gear, and hiking gear. The submission also asked the Economy Systems Committee to focus on high-dollar items, identify growth opportunities, and look into the taxes and fees that were generated. The submission came from someone interested in the work that the Committee was doing.

At the first meeting, the Economy Systems Committee had discussed whether it made sense to refresh data. Chair Fields explained that doing so could be costly in terms of time and money. He wondered how other Council Members felt about pursuing more data. Co-Chair Mingle noted that there were some services, like Zartico, that looked at cell phone tracking and visitor spending. That information could overlap with a few different data sources. What was beneficial about something like Zartico was that it would not be time-intensive. It would correlate the data in dashboards that were reported every month. There was normally a fast turnaround time, but she was not certain what the associated costs were. She shared information about Zartico in the Zoom chat box for reference.

Chair Fields wondered what the Economy Systems Committee would do with additional data. For instance, if the Committee thought it would be best to refresh the data and present that to the Stakeholders Council. Mr. Knoblock thought that if there were clear numbers about the total revenue and total tax generation, there would be a better platform to potentially lobby others to reinvest money into the industry. Mr. Rafferty reported that State and local tax revenue from the ski industry last year was over $250 million. That number was not broken down from resort to resort or region to region, but the vast majority of that took place between Big Cottonwood Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, and Park City. Mr. Knoblock asked if that was sales tax and transient room tax (“TRT”). Mr. Rafferty did not know the breakdown. It might be possible to obtain more detailed information. Mr. Marshall believed that a breakdown of that large number should be a focus for the Committee. That data was relevant in terms of cause and action, whereas small items such as the amount of rock climbing gear sold as the result of activity in the canyons, were less likely to be relevant overall.

Mr. Rafferty reported that some states charged a tax on outdoor recreational equipment as a user-based fee. Utah did not do that. He discussed search and rescue costs. The search and rescue teams were mostly rescuing Utah residents, not people who were visiting the area. Asking people out of state to pay for something that was not being utilized by them did not make sense. A more equitable way to address that would be to have a user tax on purchases of outdoor recreational equipment. Chair Fields wondered whether additional information could be provided on that topic at a future Economy Systems Committee Meeting. Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, confirmed this.

Chair Fields noted that there was a discussion at the last Stakeholders Council Meeting about the Ski Hill Resources for Economic Development (“SHRED”) Act. There seemed to be a lot of interest in that. He recommended that at the next meeting, the Economy Systems Committee share a brief history of the SHRED Act and explain where it currently stood. There were a lot of questions during the Council Meeting about what the funds could be used for, so additional clarity would be beneficial. It was determined that Chair Fields and Mr. Rafferty would work on a brief presentation. Chair Fields wanted to see the CWC Board take an interest in the SHRED Act and advocate for that. Mr. Rafferty reported that there was a score attached to it from the Office of Planning and Budget. Anything with a score meant that the government had to spend some money. There was a hope that the SHRED Act could be attached to a larger recreation bill. Mr. Rafferty had heard some discussions about there being a solution to the score, but he was not sure exactly what that meant.

Mr. Marshall had a question about the SHRED Act. He noted that Chair Fields had previously referred to the SHRED Act as revenue from a canyon staying within that canyon. In the limited reading he had done, it referred to revenue within a National Forest with a ski resort staying within that National Forest. Chair Fields confirmed that his reading was accurate. His understanding was that it stayed within the forest. In this case, the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest would retain the ski fees garnered from the ski resorts in the area. He thanked Mr. Marshall for catching that. Chair Fields stated that he and Mr. Rafferty would put together a presentation for the Stakeholders Council. It might be possible to share that presentation with the CWC Board in the future as well. It might also be possible for the Council to ask for a letter of support from the CWC Board at a later date.

**PROJECTS DISCUSSION**

1. **Committee Members will Discuss Potential Projects for the Committee to Pursue.**

Chair Fields asked the Committee Members to share suggestions that the Economy Systems Committee could consider looking into. Mr. Marshall had a few ideas. The first was relevant to all of the Systems Committees, which was to actively support fire prevention. The Forest Service now had funding to engage in that work. Whether the area of focus was recreation, economy, or ecology, there was nothing more important than preventing fires. There were decades of accumulated debris on a lot of the Forest Service lands. At the time that the Mountain Accord was drafted, the issue was not as widely discussed as it is now. He wanted fire prevention to be a goal for the Committee.

Mr. Marshall believed fire prevention had relevance to the CWNCRA. One of the major impacts of the CWNCRA was that it would create more wilderness, as 8,000 acres of new wilderness were proposed. His understanding was that it was put in as a tradeoff for the land exchanges that were no longer included. Wilderness areas did not allow for mechanized tools, so it was a disadvantage in reducing fuels because the cost was five to six times as much. That increased the fire risk. He wanted to see the goal expressed in the following manner: “The Economy Systems Committee supports all efforts to reduce fuels and other forms of fire prevention in the Wasatch Canyons.” Patrick Nelson noted that there was an issue with contractors and the capacity to actually get the treatments done.

Mr. Knoblock asked about proactive work with mechanized tools in Wilderness areas. Mr. Nelson explained that there were a number of factors that would limit the ability to use those in the Wilderness. A lot of those factors had to do with the terrain, as certain areas were too steep to use the tools there. That being said, he had seen permitted work in Wilderness areas to repair backcountry dams. Mr. Marshall wanted to see fire prevention included as one of the desired outcomes in an updated version of the Mountain Accord. There needed to be a larger focus on the issue given climate change.

Mr. Marshall noted that recreation was often equated with some form of athletics. It did not have to be that way. He thought it was important to broaden the definition of recreation. The ski industry benefited from the current definition, because skiing was an athletic activity, but there were restaurants there that contributed to recreation experiences as well. Mr. Marshall wondered whether other Committee Members were interested in broadening the definition of recreation so restaurants and other kinds of uses were recognized forms of recreation. Chair Fields wondered where that definition would be changed. Mr. Marshall explained that he was specifically talking about the Mountain Accord document. The Committee could create awareness of the existing issue and incorporate a broader definition of recreation into the Mountain Accord work. Mr. Goreham thought that suggestion would fit in well with the bullet point in the document related to quality of life.

Mr. Marshall shared an additional suggestion with the Committee. The map for the idealized version of the economic system did not include a transit stop at the base of Millcreek Canyon. He believed that needed to be amended. If a loop was created from Park City to Little Cottonwood Canyon, there needed to be a stop at the base of Millcreek Canyon that would connect to the shuttle that was being discussed for Millcreek Canyon. That stop would reduce the need for as much shuttle parking. One of the issues facing the potential shuttle was having enough parking at the base of the canyon. If the loop shown in the idealized system was ever created, he felt there should be a transit stop at the base of Millcreek Canyon to accommodate the shuttle that was being discussed.

Mr. Knoblock noted that there was a reference to year-round recreation at recreation nodes in the Mountain Accord. There was a desire to increase developed recreation at the ski resorts where there was already parking, restrooms, restaurants, and emergency medical services. Chair Fields pointed out that as the population of Utah changed and expanded, it was important to remember that not everyone wanted to recreate in active ways. There should be enough variety to accommodate different desires. Mr. Knoblock reported that the Mountain Accord also talked about hotels. Those promoted economy and also reduced vehicle trips up and down the canyon, so he felt it made sense to consider how to promote that element of the Mountain Accord. Chair Fields liked the suggestions.

Ms. Mingle referenced the TRT. She was surprised at how little was diverted to the canyons. Something that the Committee might want to consider in the future was exploring how that TRT was allocated. The Committee could determine whether it was possible to lobby for a more appropriate percentage of the canyons and canyon infrastructure. Discussions were had about the TRT allocation.

Chair Fields pointed out that there had been suggestions made by Committee Members to focus on: active support of fire suppression, broadening the definition of recreation, TRT allocation, a transit stop at the mouth of Millcreek Canyon if the idealized system came to pass, continued focus on developed recreation sites, and exploration of lodging opportunities in the canyons. He wondered whether anyone on the Committee objected to those items being priorities. Mr. Rafferty asked if the SHRED Act would also be included on that list. Chair Fields stated that the SHRED Act was on the to-do list as there would be a presentation made to the Stakeholders Council at the next meeting.

Chair Fields was looking for consensus on the recommendations that had been made. Ms. Mingle did not have any objections to what had been shared but had one potential addition. There had been a brief discussion on seasonality and supporting a more year-round income stream and workforce. Chair Fields thanked her for pointing that out and added it to the list of suggestions that were shared. He was now entertaining a motion for the Committee to approve the pursuit of those priorities.

**MOTION:** Ed Marshall made a motion to APPROVE the pursuit of the priorities outlined by Chair Fields during the November 28, 2023, Economy Systems Committee Meeting. Morgan Mingle seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

Chair Fields reviewed the Committee priorities, which included: active support of fire suppression, broadening the definition of recreation, TRT allocation, a transit stop at the mouth of Millcreek Canyon if the idealized system came to pass, continued focus on developed recreation sites, exploration of lodging opportunities in the canyons, and supporting a more year-round income stream and workforce. As for the to-do list items, there would be a presentation made by Chair Fields and Mr. Rafferty at the next Stakeholders Council Meeting about the SHRED Act. CWC Staff would work to obtain data from the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute related to tax revenue breakdowns.

Ms. Nielsen asked that Committee Members set the date for the next Economy Systems Committee Meeting. Director of Operations, Samantha Kilpack, explained that if the Committee wanted to continue to meet on the fourth Tuesday of every month, she could send those calendar invites out. However, there would be a conflict next month as it would be the day after Christmas. In 2024, one of the meeting dates would fall on Christmas Eve. There were no other holiday conflicts. She shared the current schedule with Committee Members. Mr. Marshall pointed out that it was preferable to have the subcommittee meetings before the Stakeholders Council Meeting. This was because Action Items needed to be considered and approved by the Stakeholders Council to move forward to the CWC Board. He suggested that the Economy Systems Committee meet before the Stakeholders Council Meeting took place. Discussions were had about how to accommodate holidays. It would be possible to reschedule the December meeting to a different day. Chair Fields suggested pushing the next meeting to January 2, 2023, and then resuming the previous schedule, which was the fourth Tuesday of each month. Several Committee Members had conflicts. It was determined that the meetings would take place on the second Thursday of the month from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**CLOSING**

1. **Chair Fields will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Economy Systems Committee Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Ed Marshall moved to ADJOURN the Economy Systems Committee Meeting. There was no second. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Economy Systems Committee Meeting held Tuesday, November 28, 2023.***

**Teri Forbes**

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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