

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) BOARD MEETING HELD FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2023, AT 8:00 A.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS MILLCREEK CITY HALL.**

**Board Members:** Chair Christopher F. Robinson

Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Mayor Jeff Silvestrini

Mayor Dan Knopp

Mayor Roger Bourke

Mayor Monica Zoltanski

Carlton Christensen, Ex Officio

Annalee Munsey, Ex Officio

Dave Whittekiend, Ex Officio

**Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations

Mia McNeil, Community Engagement Coordinator

Shane Topham, Legal Counsel

**Others:** Carl Fisher

John Knoblock

Kim Bell

**OPENING**

1. **Chair Christopher F. Robinson will Call the Meeting to Order and Welcome Board Members and the Public.**

Chair Chris Robinson called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Board Meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and welcomed those present. He reported that this was the last meeting of the year. Chair Robinson took a moment to thank all involved in the CWC for their hard work throughout 2023.

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLAN STATUS REVIEW**

1. **Staff will Provide an Overview of the CWC’s 2023 Work and Achievements.**

CWC Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, reviewed the CWC Annual Report and explained that the document was a summary of all the CWC achievements in 2023. An Executive Director’s Message included highlights such as the Big Cottonwood Canyon Mobility Action Plan (“BCC MAP”), the release of the Visitor Use Study, and the integration of the Visitor Use Study data into the Environmental Dashboard for the human element. The message also noted that the CWC continues to focus on bringing people together to convene and collaborate. The CWC is a unique organization because many jurisdictions and interest groups come together to share information about what is being done on an individual basis for collective discussion.

Ms. Nielsen shared information about CWC Staff. The first half of the year the organization had Co-Executive Directors that included Ms. Nielsen and Blake Perez. In July 2023, there was a CWC Staff restructuring and the result was a more traditional structure with a single Executive Director, a Director of Operations, and a Community Engagement Coordinator. Ms. Nielsen reported that CWC Staff is doing very well and there is an excellent team to work with. Information was shared about the finances. Director of Operations, Samantha Kilpack, reported that a chart summarized the financial position of the CWC. The budgeted income was shown in a pie chart that indicated that approximately 75% came from membership contributions and State appropriations. Another chart showed the expenses by category and was broken out by the actual versus budget versus projections. That information was detailed further in the document.

Ms. Kilpack reviewed some of the areas of variance. One example was that interest income was higher than budgeted due to high-interest rates. State appropriations were also slightly higher than projected. Under expenses, there were a few that would be slightly higher than projected, including transcription services as there were new committees associated with the CWC. The organization was not projecting the need for an Intern this year, so that would be a significant area of savings. She noted that there were more detailed explanations included in the CWC Summary Report for review.

Mayor Silvestrini asked about the Lease for the CWC offices. Ms. Nielsen reported that the Lease terminates at the end of April 2024. Notice had already been provided. Mayor Silvestrini asked if the organization would still be over budget on rent with the termination of the Lease before the fiscal year ends. This was confirmed. Ms. Nielsen stated that there was an unavoidable rate increase.

Information about the Stakeholders Council and Youth Council was shared. The Stakeholders Council Membership is broken out by areas of interest represented on the Council. There was information in the report to explain that the Stakeholders Council was restructured into a Committee structure that more closely resembles what took place during the Mountain Accord. At the direction of Stakeholders Council leadership, there is now a Recreation Systems Committee, Environment Systems Committee, Transportation Systems Committee, and Economy Systems Committee. Additional details about that structure will be shared during the Stakeholders Council discussion item on the meeting agenda. Ms. Nielsen reported that the Youth Council was recently created and 15 enthusiastic young people self-selected to serve on three different committees including the Events and Outreach Committee, Environmental Dashboard Education Committee, and DEI Committee. The latter was related to diversity, equity, and inclusion along the Central Wasatch.

Ms. Nielsen reviewed the Short-Term Projects Grant Program information. The document listed the eight projects that were funded in 2023 as part of the grant program that was initiated in 2020. Since the initiation of the Short-Term Projects Grant Program, the CWC has dispersed nearly $200,000 to assist with small projects across the study area. The Mountain Accord Deliverable Status chart was shared. Ms. Nielsen reported that it included the action items outlined in the last part of the Mountain Accord. She reminded those present that the Mountain Accord was the foundation for the CWC work. As a result, it was important for the CWC to continue to focus on what is outlined there.

The chart contained four different icons to represent the status of the work that is in progress, implemented, terminated, or yet to be addressed. Many of the action items that had already been implemented were also still considered a work in progress. Just because something was implemented did not mean that no additional work needs to be done there. Some of the yet-to-be-addressed items included transit improvements in Parley’s Canyon, a Cycling Plan, and the development of a program for the acquisition of private lands from willing sellers. Those items could be in the future scope of work.

Information about the Environmental Dashboard was shared. Ms. Nielsen reported that the Environmental Dashboard was released to the public in 2022 but listed in the CWC Annual Report because this year the human element was added. It incorporated the data from the trails component of the Visitor Use Study that was released in the fall. The Environmental Dashboard is an incredible tool and a worthwhile resource. She asked the Board Members to familiarize themselves with the information. The Visitor Use Study was released in October and included several data points such as total recreational visits on the U.S. Forest Service land within the study area. All of the data was collected using data collection protocols designed by the Forest Service for Forest Service land. It was possible to review all of that information in detail on the CWC website.

In May 2023, the CWC released the BCC MAP, which outlined recommendations for Big Cottonwood Canyon and included tolling, trailhead transit, improvements at intersections, and year-round bus service. In addition to the release of the BCC MAP, the Ski Bus Bypass Program is still taking place in partnership with Sandy City. The program provides a police vehicle escort for the Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) ski bus originating at the UTA Park and Ride lot on Highland Drive and 9400 South. The escort is from that Park and Ride lot to the Park and Ride at the base of Little Cottonwood Canyon. In previous years, it had reduced travel time for the ski bus by 30%. It was a creative way to incentivize transit use, reduce some canyon traffic, and increase safety in the area. Mayor Zoltanski expressed appreciation for the support received. The service ensures that the corridor and entryway into Little Cottonwood Canyon are better managed and safer overall.

There was additional discussion about the Ski Bus Bypass Program. Mayor Silvestrini noted that the CWC spent more money than anticipated last season due to the weather conditions. Ms. Nielsen reported that the Ski Bus Bypass Program did not operate every single day the ski bus operated but when there is a canyon closure in Little Cottonwood Canyon for maintenance or snow removal.

Ms. Neilsen shared information about the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act (“CWNCRA”). It was the project that underpinned the CWC work. The information in the CWC Annual Report was there as a reminder of the CWNCRA work and where the border will be if the CWNCRA is passed and implemented. The project has been on hiatus to allow the State time to work on the Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”). Now that the EIS has gone through all of the processes, it might be an appropriate time to re-focus on the CWNCRA work in 2024. Whether it is a focus in the year ahead will depend on the decisions made by the Board.

Community Engagement Coordinator, Mia McNeil, reviewed the Community Engagement Statistics and reported that the CWC Annual Report highlighted the number of followers on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. There are newly created accounts on TikTok and Threads, so different demographics have access to information and the different resources the CWC provides. Ms. McNeil discussed the community outreach work done in 2023 and reviewed data about the newsletters distributed.

Chair Robinson thanked CWC Staff for the CWC Annual Report document. It is concise but still provides a lot of information about the work the organization did in 2023. CWC Board Members expressed appreciation for the work that had been done and the summary document.

**STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

1. **Stakeholders Council Leadership will Provide an Overview of the Work and Accomplishments of the Stakeholders Council During 2023.**
2. **Commissioners and Co-Chairs will Discuss, Set Priorities, and Assign Topics, and Goals.**
3. **Co-Chairs Knoblock and Fisher will Deliver a Letter from the Stakeholders Council.**

Stakeholders Council Leadership, John Knoblock, and Carl Fisher were present. Mr. Knoblock reported that he would share the 2023 highlights with the Board. At the beginning of the year, there was a Stakeholders Council Mini Retreat. A Consultant came in to review how the Stakeholders Council felt about the work that had been done and what could be improved. One of the takeaways was that the Council wanted a better connection to the CWC Board. There was a desire to receive more direction from the CWC. He understood that the CWC Board wanted the Stakeholders Council to have the freedom to focus on areas of interest, but there was a desire to have direction from the CWC Board as well, so it would be possible to assist in a more hands-on manner. The Council also wanted to make sure that the work done was directly tied to the Mountain Accord.

Mr. Knoblock reported that the Stakeholders Council forwarded a letter to the CWC Board about the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. The Council hoped the Phase I approach could address the existing issues and eliminate the need for Phase III. Mayor Zoltanski asked what the Council's response was to the letter sent to UDOT. Mr. Knoblock stated that there was general support for the approach taken by the CWC Board.

Mr. Fisher thought the letter was an example of coordination between the Stakeholders Council and the CWC Board. However, one of the challenges of the organization was the time it took to follow the appropriate steps. There could be issues when something arose and there were only 30 days to submit comments. There was a desire from the Stakeholders Council to have a more flexible process so it would be possible to respond when those situations arose. Chair Robinson explained that the CWC had tried to address that issue by having Stakeholders Council leadership participate in the Executive/Budget/Audit Committee Meetings so there were more opportunities to interact and share. Mr. Fisher believed additional work could be done to strengthen communication and the organization.

Mayor Zoltanski asked if a CWC Board liaison at the Stakeholder Council Meetings would be beneficial. Mr. Fisher confirmed that a liaison would be meaningful to Council Members. He noted that CWC Staff also acted as a liaison between the CWC Board and the Stakeholders Council. Mayor Erin Mendenhall suggested that during the CWC Board Retreat, a communication model be discussed to address instances when a faster response was necessary. It was worth looking into the options.

Mr. Fisher noted that the Council is focused on the idea of consensus and collaboration. It took time to build a certain level of consensus within the Stakeholders Council. When there was a 30-day or 45-day comment period, it was difficult to achieve that consensus within the allotted timeframe as well as work around the public meeting notices that were required and various scheduling conflicts. Mr. Knoblock used the Millcreek Canyon Committee as an example. If there was something that the Committee wanted to address and comment on, there would need to be consensus on a Committee level. The matter would then be passed on to the Stakeholders Council for consideration and then passed onto the CWC Board. There were a lot of steps involved and it could be a lengthy process.

Ex Officio Dave Whittekiend believed the discussion had to do with the evolving role of the CWC and what the group wanted to be involved in. If there was a desire for the CWC to become more involved in projects, such as the Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) grant and the gravel pit, there needed to be a way to get out ahead of those matters. For that to happen, there needed to be an understanding across the Central Wasatch that the CWC wanted to have an active role in what was happening in the area. He suggested broad communication across all entities. Additional discussions were had about the current CWC processes and what could be done to streamline them.

Mr. Knoblock shared information about the work the Millcreek Canyon Committee had done in 2023. There had been a lot of discussions about the FLAP grant. He noted that there was a desire to have a bicycle lane that went all the way up the canyon, but there was not a desire to change the character of the canyon. As for a potential Millcreek shuttle, a National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) process was needed. There was a desire to meet the needs of the Salt Lake Ranger District and provide information about potential parking, funding, and operations before the NEPA was pursued.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee had also discussed an 18-acre parcel of land in the lower part of Millcreek Canyon that was within the Millcreek City limits. It could be developed and was for sale. That matter tied back to one of the items in the Mountain Accord, which was to acquire private parcels from willing sellers. This was an example of a willing seller, but there was no clear process in place. Mayor Silvestrini noted that there had been conversations between Millcreek and Salt Lake County about how to potentially acquire that property. The Millcreek Planning Staff also had some communications with the realtor that was advertising the property. There were some significant development impediments there, but there was developable land on the parcel that was being sold.

Mayor Silvestrini reported that Millcreek and the County had some interest in improving the fee station. The property being discussed was adjacent to that fee station. It would be useful to have a little more land available as it would be possible to create another downbound lane so people could exit the canyon faster. The current price of the land was too high, but discussions were taking place. Mayor Mendenhall believed in this instance, it was appropriate for Millcreek to look into acquiring the land, not necessarily the CWC. It made sense to develop a funding stream and a process for the CWC Board to consider the acquisition of property, but in most cases, it made sense for individual entities to acquire the relevant properties. The CWC process could be utilized as more of a last resort. Mr. Knoblock noted that if there was a clearly defined process in place, there could be a less reactive response. He discussed other parcels that had been sold and the impacts of those sales on the area.

Chair Robinson reported that several years ago, a Land Tenure Committee was formed that brainstormed ideas about funding for open space acquisition. Even though the CWC did not have the funds to acquire individual properties, the organization could work as a convener of ideas. There was a lot of conservation funding out there. There could be brainstorming done at a CWC level. Mr. Fisher noted that the Environment Systems Committee had discussed some possibilities. Ex Officio Whittekiend reported that having a good index for funding opportunities was beneficial. The Forest Service had different funding streams, but some of those were years out. There were annual appropriations that could be useful if it was possible to take a phased approach with willing sellers. Alternatively, a land trust could purchase something, and then the Forest Service could pay off the land trust over a certain number of years. There were several options available. Mr. Knoblock reiterated the need to have a solid process in place to move that kind of work forward.

Additional information about the Millcreek Canyon Committee was shared. Mr. Knoblock stated that the canyon was doing well overall. The Forest Service had two education enforcement rangers in the area and some trail projects had taken place, in which the Committee had been involved. He reported that the Forest Service and Salt Lake County were working on the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan. In January or February, a draft plan would be released. The plan would likely be completed in the fall and would include information about existing trails as well as social trails that could become Forest Service System Trails and social trails that should be shut down for protection purposes. The plan would also include a signage program and a program for the trailheads to make sure those were in the appropriate locations. There was a lot of important work being done, which was exciting to see.

In 2023, it was determined that the Stakeholders Council would have Systems Committees, similar to what was seen during the Mountain Accord process. There was now an Economy Systems Committee, Environment Systems Committee, Transportation Systems Committee, and Recreation Systems Committee. Currently, those committees are working to develop different goals and action items. All of the Systems Committees had at least one initial meeting, but some had met a few times. Mr. Knoblock explained that the Stakeholders Council previously met quarterly and then bi-monthly. However, many Council Members wanted to be more actively involved in the work. The Systems Committees allowed Council Members to be involved in a Committee as well as the Council.

The previously existing Trails Committee would end and that work would be covered by the Recreation Systems Committee. That Committee had met once so far and the intention was to focus on issues like access to recreation. For instance, more winter access and transit to trails. When the Mountain Accord took place, the northern boundary was approximately half a mile north of I-80. When the CWC was formed, the boundary was drawn differently. That was something that could be discussed further. The whole watershed boundary of Parley’s Canyon was within the CWC boundary that was drawn and there were some excellent recreation opportunities there. Chair Robinson asked about the Mountain Accord boundary compared to the CWC boundary. Mr. Knoblock did not necessarily believe that the CWC boundary needed to be changed, but he pointed out that the CWC had not done much in Parley’s Canyon. It was something to consider with respect to future work.

Mr. Knoblock shared information about the Economy Systems Committee. He explained that there had been two meetings so far and the intention was to determine what their mission and goals would be. He noted that economic and transportation work were linked together. There was a desire to clearly identify the total revenues generated by the ski industry and the affiliated businesses.

Mr. Fisher further discussed the new Stakeholders Council structure with the Systems Committees. When Mr. Knoblock and Mr. Fisher became Co-Chairs of the Stakeholders Council, there were discussions about the level of engagement. The Systems Committees would allow there to be more involvement, innovation, and collaboration. Council Members were now feeling more included and heard. Every single Council Member was fully engaged in the process, which was beneficial. There was a desire to standardize the meeting schedules so it was possible to share ideas more effectively with the full Stakeholders Council. From there, ideas could be refined and then passed to the CWC Board. Mr. Fisher stressed the importance of being proactive about issues rather than reactive.

The Transportation Systems Committee looked at how to implement transportation for all users in the Central Wasatch during all seasons of the year. There was a desire to address the dependence on personal vehicles and focus on effective transit. Mr. Fisher reported that he had spoken to someone in Alta recently. In the late 1990s, Alta was served by 87 buses per day during the ski season. Now, there were only 23 buses per day during the ski season. There were twice as many people in the area and a quarter of the bus service. That was one of the issues facing the area in terms of transportation. It was essential to have partners who wanted to rise to the challenges that faced the area. There was a strong desire for year-round transit service. Currently, the Transportation Systems Committee is looking into a Special Service District for the area that could result in revenue generation. At the last meeting, there was a discussion with representatives from High Valley Transit and UTA. The canyons needed to be part of the transportation network. Additionally, visitation needed to be managed. The Transportation Systems Committee wanted to determine how to better integrate and support transit in the canyons. It was essential to drastically reduce reliance on personal vehicles.

Mayor Dan Knopp reported that managed parking had started earlier that day. The initial attempt went well. Both ski areas and Brighton had decided to do reserved parking, so there was not a rush at 8:00 a.m. It was wonderful to see the conditions more smoothed out based on the initial introduction. Mr. Fisher noted that Park and Ride lots and reserved parking would change behaviors. Vehicular occupancy would likely increase in the canyons, but the issues still existed in the valley. Massive parking infrastructure would be needed to handle the number of vehicles there.

Mr. Fisher discussed the Environment Systems Committee. To get out in front of environmental issues, it was necessary to change policies. That was what the CWNCRA was attempting to do. There were economic, transportation, recreation, and environmental-related challenges in the canyons, and the CWNCRA legislation created the framework needed to address all of those issues. He did not want to see the legislation continue to be pushed to the side while transportation was addressed, because he believed the legislation would assist transportation. The Environment Systems Committee wrote a letter, which was passed unanimously by the Stakeholders Council. It asked the CWC Board to make legislation the priority of the organization moving forward. The Committee had also discussed funding. Mr. Fisher believed it was critical that the CWC try to bring Salt Lake County back into the organization as Salt Lake County was an important partner.

Mr. Fisher informed those present that this would be his last meeting with the CWC. He thanked everyone for their dedication to the Central Wasatch. Chair Robinson was grateful for all of his contributions. Mr. Fisher reminded the CWC Board that the organization was unique and important. It had the power to convene people and only people could solve the existing issues in the Central Wasatch. Mr. Fisher noted that there would be a going away party thrown for him by Save Our Canyons, which all were welcome to attend on December 21, 2023, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

**DECEMBER BOARD BUSINESS**

1. **(Action) The Board will Consider Approving the Minutes of the CWC Special Board Meeting Held on October 30, 2023.**

**MOTION:** Mayor Mendenhall moved to APPROVE the CWC Special Board Meeting Minutes from the Meeting Held on October 30, 2023. Mayor Silvestrini seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

1. **(Action) Consideration of Resolution 2023-24 - Adopting an Annual Meeting Schedule for the CWC’s Public Bodies for 2024.**
2. **Staff Provided Board and EBAC Meeting Date Recommendations in an Attached Memo.**

Chair Robinson noted that the annual meeting schedule was included in the Meeting Materials Packet. The CWC Board will meet bi-monthly and the Executive/Budget/Audit Committee will meet monthly. The Stakeholders Council will meet bi-monthly.

**MOTION:** Mayor Mendenhall moved to APPROVE Resolution 2023-24 – Adopting an Annual Meeting Schedule for the CWC’s Public Bodies for 2024. Mayor Knopp seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

1. **(Action) Consideration of Resolution 2023-25 - Appointing a Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer of the Board for 2024-2026.**

Chair Robinson reported that there had been informal discussions about the appointments for the Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer of the CWC Board for 2024-2026. Based on those discussions, the proposal was that for 2024-2026, Mayor Silvestrini would serve as Chair of the CWC, Mayor Mendenhall serve as Co-Chair, and Chair Robinson would serve as the Secretary/Treasurer. There was discussion about whether the appropriate title was Co-Chair or Vice-Chair. CWC Legal Counsel, Shane Topham, clarified that the formal designation was Vice-Chair, but for years, there had been a desire to refer to that person as a Co-Chair. As a result, a Co-Chair was appropriate.

**MOTION:** Mayor Knopp moved to APPROVE Resolution 2023-25 – Appointing a Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer of the Board for 2024-2026, with Jeff Silvestrini as Chair, Erin Mendenhall as Co-Chair, and Christopher F. Robinson as Secretary/Treasurer. Mayor Zoltanski seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

1. **(Action) Consideration of Resolution 2023-26 - Approving Changes to Stakeholders Council Membership.**

Ms. Nielsen shared Resolution 2023-26 and reported that a few Stakeholders Council Members were formally leaving the Council. Those resignations had occurred for various reasons, including moving out of State and family obligations. The Resolution would officially release certain members from the Stakeholders Council and officially add two new Stakeholders. To address the remaining vacancies, a call for applications will be opened at the start of the new year. There would be a selection process with the Selection Committee after applications were received.

Mr. Fisher noted that during the Stakeholders Council Mini Retreat earlier in the year, there was discussion about what representation was missing on the Council. Woody Lee is the current Executive Director of Utah Diné Bikéyah, a Native American-led grassroots non-profit organization, and will be added to the Council. He was thrilled to see additional types of representation. Additionally, Bri Sullivan from Women of the Wasatch will be added to the Stakeholders Council.

**MOTION:** Mayor Silvestrini moved to APPROVE Resolution 2023-26 – Approving Changes to Stakeholders Council Membership. Mayor Mendenhall seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Robinson thanked Millcreek City for hosting the CWC Board Meeting. He also thanked CWC Staff for their work on the CWC Annual Report and CWC Board Members for their service. The CWC Board Members thanked Chair Robinson for serving as Chair for the last several years. Ms. Nielsen informed those present that some CWC Board Retreat activities had been scheduled to take place but were moved to the January 8, 2023, meeting date instead.

**CLOSING**

1. **Chair Robinson will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Board Meeting.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 a.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Board Meeting held Friday, December 15, 2023.***

**Teri Forbes**

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

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