

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) HYBRID BOARD RETREAT HELD MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024, AT 3:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS MILLCREEK CITY HALL.**

**Board Members:** Chair Jeff Silvestrini

Councilor Christopher F. Robinson

Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Mayor Dan Knopp

Mayor Michael Weichers

Mayor Roger Bourke

Mayor Monica Zoltanski

Ex Officio Member, Dave Whittekiend

Ex Officio Member, Annalee Munsey

**Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director of Policy

Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations

Mia McNeil, Community Engagement Coordinator

**Others:**  Laura Briefer

John Knoblock

**OPENING**

1. **Chair Jeff Silvestrini will Open the Meeting and Welcome Fellow Commissioners, Staff, and Members of the Public.**

Chair Jeff Silvestrini called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Hybrid Board Retreat to order at 3:30 p.m. and welcomed those present. There were in-person and virtual attendees.

1. **Review and Approval of December 15, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes.**

**MOTION:** Mayor Zoltanski moved to APPROVE the December 15, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes. Mayor Weichers seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

**COVER STORY VISIONING EXERCISE**

1. **Commissioners, Stakeholders Council Leadership, and Staff will Participate in a “Cover Story” Exercise to Develop a Broad 2024 Vision.**

Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, reported that this is the second half of the annual Board Retreat. The first half was held in December 2023 at which time the 2023 Annual Report was reviewed. There were also discussions with Stakeholders Council leadership. Additionally, some CWC Board business was handled. During the second portion of the Board Retreat, there would be a series of visioning and prioritization exercises. The goal was ultimately to create a 2024 Strategic Plan. There were three exercises planned for the Board Retreat, which included the Cover Story Visioning Exercise, the Impact and Effort Exercise, and the 2024 Storyboarding Exercise. The Cover Story Visioning Exercise was broad while the next exercises would narrow the results further.

Director of Operations, Samantha Kilpack, reported that the first exercise was the Cover Story Visioning Exercise. It was intended to begin the creative process. She asked those present to imagine reading the newspaper one morning and seeing that the CWC was on the front page being celebrated for a specific achievement. The Board Members were asked to think about what the front page would state. This would include a headline for the cover story, potential quotes, a cover image, and other highlights. She asked the Board Members to brainstorm what they most wanted to see accomplished by the CWC and written about on the front page of a newspaper. Results will be shared after the brainstorming session. Ms. Nielsen clarified that the purpose of the first exercise was to brainstorm broad ideas. The next exercise would contextualize all of the brainstormed ideas that were shared. After that, the final exercise would narrow the results down further to result in a 2024 Strategic Plan.

Ms. Kilpack shared suggestions for the Cover Story Visioning Exercise. She asked that Board Members suspend disbelief during the process and think about whatever was shared as if it had already happened. Board Members were given a short amount of time to brainstorm ideas for the Cover Story Visioning Exercise. Some of the suggestions related to the Central Wasatch National Conservation Recreation Area Act (“CWNCRA”) and the Millcreek Canyon shuttle. Mayor Roger Bourke shared a potential headline, which was, “CWC Concludes Little Cottonwood Canyon Gondola Is A Poor Choice.” Mayor Erin Mendenhall suggested something along the lines of, “Phase I Is Sufficient and Exceeds Expectations.” Councilor Christoper Robinson shared a suggestion for the exercise, which was, “Stakeholders Have Agreed to a Transportation System in Both Canyons.”

Mayor Mike Weichers believed the suggestion from Councilor Robinson tied into one of the biggest accomplishments from the CWC in 2023, which was the Big Cottonwood Canyon Mobility Action Plan (“BCC MAP”). The intention was to get out in front of transportation solutions instead of waiting, which was what had happened in Little Cottonwood Canyon. A headline could state, “The BCC MAP Gives UDOT a Vision for Transportation Solutions in Big Cottonwood Canyon.” Another suggestion was made, which was, “The Transportation Solution Agreement Across Parties in Both Canyons Unlocks Federal Willingness to Advance the CWNCRA.” There was support for that cover story idea. Laura Briefer shared another headline with those present, which was, “CWC Maps 10-Year Plan that Addresses Recreation and Watershed Challenges and Everyone Is Happy About It.”

Ms. Nielsen reviewed the Mountain Accord deliverables that were referenced in the Annual Report:

* Transit improvements in Parley’s Canyon;
* Transportation improvements in the Cottonwood Canyons;
* Millcreek Canyon shuttle program;
* Comprehensive cycling plan for the study area;
* Develop a program for the acquisition of private lands from willing sellers;
* Further, develop the Environmental Dashboard with a potential Environmental Dashboard app;
* Designate a National Conservation Recreation Area;
* Land exchanges between the U.S. Forest Service and ski resorts;
* Identify long-term funding for programs in the Central Wasatch;
* Facilitate long-term and short-term special projects.

Some of the items listed were in progress and some had not been pursued for various reasons. John Knoblock shared a suggestion for the exercise, which was, “Land Preservation Program for the Tri-Canyons Area Is Wildly Successful and Preserves Lands for Public Access.” Mayor Monica Zoltanski suggested, “Utah Adopts Comprehensive Preservation Land Trust Agreements Between Municipalities.” Ms. Kilpack suggested choosing one of the brainstormed ideas to focus on further. For instance, Board Members could think about quotes or images that would be included as part of the cover story. It was suggested that the focus be on the “Phase I Is Sufficient and Exceeds Expectations” idea. Mayor Mendenhall suggested that the language state, “Phase I Is Sufficient and Unifying – Federal Support Is Unlocked.” Mayor Dan Knopp believed a unified approach was what was needed.

Mayor Knopp reported that he had shared information at the recent Stakeholders Council Transportation Systems Committee Meeting. The managed parking in the canyon had been wildly successful. There was no gridlock in the morning and it was possible to drive right into Brighton without dealing with a line of vehicles. The managed parking was working effectively. There were some unintended consequences, which included the 1:00 p.m. rush, but there was a lot of support for the managed parking. The traffic was organized and managed now, which made a notable difference in the area. Last year, 50 to 60 tickets were written per day for illegal parking and now it was two.

As for support from the ski resorts, Mayor Knopp explained that the ski resorts understood that something needed to be done. Mike Doyle at Brighton Resort was fully supportive. Amber Broadaway at Solitude Mountain Resort had dropped off the Friday and had switched to only Saturday and Sunday. That being said, she had informed him that there was a long-term commitment. Councilor Robinson asked what was being done with parking on the weekdays. Mayor Knopp clarified that there were no reservations during the week, but there were on the weekends. This was a work in progress, but so far, there have been a lot of positive results seen with the managed parking. He believed the managed parking was an indicator that the Phase I measures for Little Cottonwood Canyon could also be effective. He stressed the importance of starting to make positive changes.

Mayor Bourke stated that the experience shared by Mayor Knopp was similar to what he had seen. It was the third year that there were parking reservations in Alta, which were now on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday until 1:00 p.m. It worked far better than anyone had anticipated as there was a lot of skepticism when it first started. Ex Officio Member, Dave Whittekiend thought managed parking was an example of something others did not believe would be accepted, but had ultimately been accepted. As a result, it made sense to think of bolder ideas since people were likely to accept them. Mayor Mendenhall thought it made sense for the CWC to collect data to show those kinds of initiatives were successful, achievable, and less painful than businesses and residents may have feared.

Mayor Mendenhall thought it was important that there not be disconnected experiences. It was necessary to focus on the results achieved and the next steps. Each accomplishment could lead to the ultimate goal, which was the conclusion that Phase I was successful across the board. Additional discussions were had about incremental transportation improvements. Mr. Whittekiend shared comments about bold thinking. He acknowledged that there was likely more that could be done, but pushback often held people back from taking action. Mayor Mendenhall thought it was important to link together what had been done and what could be done. Chair Silvestrini pointed out that the CWC was uniquely positioned to represent different communities and stakeholders in these matters.

Mayor Mendenhall believed the Congressional Delegation needed to hear from the CWC if it was determined that Phase I prioritization was something the organization wanted to actively embrace. For example, updates could be shared with the Congressional Delegation about progress or challenges related to Phase I implementation. Chair Silvestrini wondered whether she was thinking about that in the context of Phase I or in the context of the CWNCRA. He thought that whenever there were discussions with the Congressional Delegation, it was important to remind them that the CWNCRA was still a priority for the organization. Mayor Mendenhall thought the communication should make it clear that the CWNCRA was still the goal of the CWC and Phase I was the best path towards that.

Mayor Weichers noted that the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) would not commit to a metric that would determine whether or not Phase I worked. He planned to ask that there be metrics to determine whether Phase I was working. From there, it would be possible to implement changes and evaluate the results. Mayor Zoltanski agreed that it was important to establish and define objective criteria for success. If UDOT was unwilling to create criteria, it was something that the CWC could focus on instead. It made sense to establish some framework to better understand what success would look like with Phase I. Chair Silvestrini thought that was an important focus.

Mayor Zoltanski noted that vehicle counts could be one measure of success. That being said, it was important to have both qualitative and quantitative data. There could be user satisfaction surveys as well. Mayor Weichers liked the idea of the CWC being proactive. The organization was qualified to determine what would be considered successful implementation of Phase I. Mayor Mendenhall wondered whether the Mountain Accord could provide some definitions of success. Ms. Nielsen referenced the Transportation White Paper that was worked on by the Transportation Systems Group during the Mountain Accord. That document had some ideas listed as did the Economy White Paper. It would be possible to circulate those to CWC Board Members for review and consideration.

Mayor Mendenhall believed that the ski resorts needed to be included in defining what success looked like as did Salt Lake City Public Utilities and some others. It was also important to look back at the Mountain Accord process and determine how success was defined back then. Mayor Zoltanski thought there should be an inventory created for the programs that were currently available, such as tire inspection, enforcement of four-wheel drive or chains, vehicle counts, wait times to get into the canyon, and the number of closure days. This would make it possible to do accurate comparisons.

Ms. Kilpack summarized what had been proposed by the CWC Board. The imagined cover headline was, “UDOT Concludes Phase I of the Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement Is Sufficient - Unifying Unlocks Federal Legislation.” Some of the additional language drafted was:

* Mountain Accord-inspired or CWC-developed metrics helped to measure the success of Phase I;
* Strategic and bold decisions that saw pushback were aided by the CWC data and results;
* Strong communication throughout the process helped the project to be successful.

Ms. Kilpack questioned whether there was a desire to brainstorm further or move to the next exercise on the Board Retreat agenda. Ms. Nielsen thought it made sense to move to the next exercise. Mayor Zoltanski noted that the headlines proposed highlighted some notable aspirations. She stressed the importance of the Phase I work and establishing criteria. It was a worthwhile area to focus on in 2024. Mayor Knopp believed UDOT was worried that lawsuits would shut down the process. Ms. Briefer reported that there had been some communication with her about Phase I because Water Supply Permits for the transit buildings were needed. Some aspects of Phase I were moving forward.

Additional discussions were had about what was proposed for Phase I. Mayor Zoltanski pointed out that there was broad public support for enhanced buses and mobility hubs. Whether the Phase I work was done under the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS or independently, there was still support for the approaches that had been outlined. It was important to move that work forward. The CWC could continue the discussions, build out some of the concepts, and deliver potential solutions. Mr. Knoblock noted that the Legislation that put forth $150 million last year made no mention of the UDOT Little Cottonwood EIS, but stated that it was for improving transportation in the canyons. Chair Silvestrini thought that the CWC should focus on funding for services and data collection.

Mayor Bourke thought there should be an independent evaluator for the effectiveness of Phase I. He was concerned about Phase I being judged solely by UDOT. It was noted that the Wasatch Front Regional Council (“WFRC”) might be able to do some data analysis. That was an organization that was trusted by all parties and could be considered as an evaluator. It might be possible for WFRC to receive an appropriation from the $150 million to handle that responsibility. Mayor Mendenhall noted that the Transportation and Land Use Connection grant might be possible with a potential match from the $150 million. There was support for taking that kind of approach moving forward. Board Members further discussed the WFRC and the work done there. Chair Silvestrini felt good about the ideas that had been shared and the potential approach, as it could result in meaningful achievements. Ms. Briefer shared another potential cover story headline related to the discussions that the CWC Board had during the exercise, which was: “CWC Acquires Grants to Help UDOT Define Success.”

**IMPACT AND EFFORT EXERCISE**

1. **Commissioners, Stakeholders Council Leadership, and Staff will Participate in an “Impact/Effort” Exercise to Develop 2024 Priorities.**

Ms. Nielsen reiterated that the Cover Story Visioning Exercise was intended to focus on broad ideas. The next exercise was the Impact and Effort Exercise, which would move into the contextualization process. There was a matrix that would assist with that. For a Transportation and Land Use Connection grant and seeking a match from the State, she wondered whether Board Members would classify that as a high-impact high effort, high-impact low effort, low-impact low effort, or low-impact high effort. Mayor Mendenhall described it as high impact and low effort because WFRC would handle a lot of the work. Mayor Zoltanski pointed out that some coordination would be needed.

Councilor Robinson thought it made sense to focus on simpler solutions. Even if buses were determined to be the best option, those still took time to order and there were facilities to consider. That process would be lengthy. However, there were other elements of the Phase I work that could be implemented before that. Mayor Mendenhall thought that supporting and helping to implement the Phase I work was one of the key roles of the CWC. Councilor Robinson agreed but reiterated that the buses themselves were still several years away. There were shorter-term options to consider. Mayor Zoltanski thought it made sense to start with a timeline for the different items listed in Phase I. Discussions were had about the potential to switch to electric buses in the future as well as staffing. Mr. Knoblock informed those present that according to Ms. Broadaway, Solitude Mountain Resort was switching to vanpooling for employees to remove ski resort employees from the buses.

Ms. Nielsen noted that those attending the meeting in person had sticky notes and pens in front of them. She asked that everyone distill the ideas from the first exercise into action items that could be put into the 2024 Strategic Plan. CWC Board Members were asked to use a separate sticky note for each idea. Those notes would then be added to the matrix. Ms. Kilpack further explained the matrix that was before the CWC Board. She stated that a high-effort and low-impact item might not be as necessary to pursue whereas something high-impact and low-effort was an easier win for the CWC.

After ideas were written down, Ms. Nielsen read out the different suggestions. One was to create and fund projects for a cycling plan. She noted that the cycling plan was referenced in the Mountain Accord but had not been addressed by the CWC yet. Mr. Knoblock thought it would be low effort and medium impact. As for the suggestion to increase public knowledge about the CWC's efforts and mission, that was high impact and low effort. The next item was to publicly communicate the progress of Phase I. Board Members thought that would have a medium impact and require a medium amount of effort. The next idea was related to the CWNCRA, which would be high impact and high effort.

The next idea shared was to compile a how-to manual that members could use to educate constituents. Chair Silvestrini explained that the manual was his idea. Part of the success of Phase I would relate to communicating with constituents about things like reservation systems, buses, carpooling, and so on. Cities could reach residents and it was possible to increase the education component. Mr. Knoblock believed that would be a low-effort and high-impact item on the matrix. Chair Silvestrini stated that the idea was to develop something standardized that could be shared.

Ms. Nielsen read the next idea, which was to engage with UDOT. It was determined that it would be a high-impact and high-effort task. The next idea was to engage with Federal Delegation and State leaders to promote the CWNCRA. Board Members believed that was a medium-effort and high-impact item. The next item was to work with UDOT and WFRC to implement Phase I components and create a framework to measure success. It was determined to be a high-impact item that was a lower effort for the CWC. The next item was to move the CWNCRA forward, which was high impact and high effort. Next was to establish the CWC as the convener of ideas. Chair Silvestrini thought that a particular item would require a medium amount of effort and would result in a medium impact.

Additional ideas were added to the matrix to measure impact and effort. One suggestion was to coordinate improved and enhanced trailhead facilities. Chair Silvestrini believed that was medium to high in terms of both effort and impact. Ms. Nielsen read another suggestion, which was to inventory private lands for public acquisition. Chair Silvestrini thought that was low impact and high effort. As for an idea to develop metrics to define success, that could be paired with the WFRC-related item.

The next idea was to identify vulnerabilities in the watershed. Ms. Briefer noted that there might be some specific vulnerabilities for projects that could be better defined. Another suggestion was to continue to promote a conflict resolution process with UDOT to mitigate litigation. It was believed that the idea was a lower effort since the idea was to promote the idea of conflict resolution. Ms. Nielsen read another Board Member's suggestion, which was to focus on private land conservation in the canyons. The next item read had to do with defining a strategy for the Congressional Delegation related to Phase I unity and the CWNCRA. Ex Officio Whittekiend pointed out that developing a strategy and a plan was likely low to medium effort whereas implementing that plan would be high effort. Mayor Mendenhall thought it would be a worthwhile and low effort to send a cohesive message that the CWNCRA was still a priority for the CWC. Councilor Robinson thought part of that messaging was that there was Phase I, which was universally accepted, and that should be the transportation solution. As a result of that transportation solution, the CWNCRA was appropriate. He explained that CWNCRA work had been paused for transportation details to move ahead. It was determined that asking the Delegation about the CWNCRA was high impact and low effort.

Ms. Kilpack shared another Board Member idea, which was to lobby the Legislature to fund data collection and analysis regarding the success of Phase I. That was considered high impact and low effort. The next item was to work collectively on the Transportation and Land Use Connection grant application. It was determined that it was low effort and high impact. Another idea was to continue with short-term projects. Ms. Nielsen believed that it was low effort and high impact. Chair Silvestrini confirmed that short-term projects had a high impact and added to the effectiveness of the CWC. It was something he felt the organization should continue to prioritize moving forward.

The next idea discussed was to establish an app for coordinated resort reservations. Mayor Bourke reported that there was an app for Alta currently. One of the issues with a coordinated app was that Snowbird had not expressed interest. Mayor Mendenhall thought the app suggestion was somewhat related to the idea of short-term projects. Chair Silvestrini wondered whether any of the ski resorts would be interested in that kind of coordinated app. Mayor Knopp reported that he had brought up the idea of a coordinated resort app previously, but there did not seem to be an appetite for that.

Ms. Nielsen pointed out that at the last CWC Board Retreat, there was a suggestion made to create a CWC app. It was a relatively popular idea at the time but had not been pursued or budgeted for. That kind of app could include the Environmental Dashboard as well as other CWC work. Mayor Mendenhall explained that a CWC app with that information was a lower priority for her this year.

Additional discussions were had about a coordinated ski resort reservation app. Chair Silvestrini thought it would be nice to see an app that all four of the ski resorts used so it could cover both parking reservations and carpooling. He wanted to see the ski resorts come together on an app like that. It would work better if there was one cohesive system rather than there being four different apps. Mayor Mendenhall suggested that the CWC be the convener. It would be possible to convene resort representatives to discuss the idea of a consolidated parking app. Councilor Robinson thought that convening might be a worthwhile starting place. When it came to the ski resorts, it might also be worth thinking about whether some of those interactions should occur beyond the Stakeholders Council level. There was support to look into a ski resort reservation app and convene the ski resorts for additional discussion, but there was not currently support for an app focused on CWC work.

It was determined that the reservation app would be considered medium effort and high impact. Councilor Robinson wondered whether the suggestion was limited to a parking app or if it was broader and related to engagement with the ski resorts. Ms. Briefer believed it needed to be broader. There was an appetite for the ski resorts to engage with the CWC in a more meaningful way. There could be a separate conversation about how to better engage with the ski resorts moving forward.

Ms. Kilpack read the next suggestion, which was to recruit Salt Lake County back to the CWC. Mayor Mendenhall thought they would likely want to participate again if the WFRC was involved in defining Phase I's success. Another suggestion was to protect the Little Cottonwood Canyon watershed. That was determined to be medium effort and high impact. One suggestion that had been submitted was to advocate for and help to implement the Phase I components. That would likely be high effort and high impact. As for the Millcreek Canyon shuttle, that was believed to be high effort and high impact. The next idea was to revisit land exchanges, which would be high effort. Mayor Knopp was not sure that land exchanges were still on the table for the ski areas. Councilor Robinson thought it made sense to speak more broadly about land conservation rather than the idea of the ski resorts trading lands, as there were some issues there. That being said, the broader concept of protecting lands made sense. Adding to the Environmental Dashboard was suggested, which was low effort, but would ultimately require some funding. Discussions were had about the ideas shared.

**2024 STORYBOARDING EXERCISE**

1. **Commissioners, Stakeholders Council Leadership, and Staff will Participate in a Storyboarding Exercise to Determine a 2024 Strategic Plan.**

Ms. Nielsen noted that there were only a few minutes remaining in the CWC Board Retreat. There were stickers available for the in-person attendees. Those present were asked to use those stickers and vote for the items that the CWC Board wanted to prioritize. The items with the most votes in the end would be the priorities within the 2024 Strategic Plan. Those present in person placed their votes, but Mayor Bourke informed Ms. Nielsen that it was difficult to vote effectively by attending virtually.

**RECAP**

1. **Staff will Provide a Recap of the Previous Three Exercises and Outline the Next Steps.**

It was reiterated that the next steps would be to review the votes and create the 2024 Strategic Plan.

**CLOSING**

1. **Chair Silvestrini will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Board Retreat.**

**MOTION:** Mayor Mendenhall moved to ADJOURN the CWC Board Retreat. Mayor Knopp seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

The CWC Board Retreat adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Board Retreat held on Monday, January 8, 2024.***

**Teri Forbes**

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

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