



1 **MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”)**
2 **LEGISLATIVE AND LAND TENURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD**
3 **MONDAY APRIL 29, 2024, AT 4:00 PM. THE MEETING WAS**
4 **CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM.**
5 **THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICES LOCATED AT**
6 **41 NORTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE 102, SALT LAKE CITY,**
7 **UTAH.**

8
9 **Board Members:** Mayor Erin Mendenhall, Chair
10 Mayor Jeff Silvestrini
11 Christopher F. Robinson
12 Laura Briefer

13
14 **Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director
15 Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations

16
17 **Others:** Pat Shea, CWC Stakeholder
18

19 **OPENING**

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21 1. **Chair Erin Mendenhall will Open the Legislative and Land Tenure Committee Meeting**
22 **and Welcome Fellow Commissioners, Staff, and Members of the Public.**

23
24 Mayor Jeff Silvestrini called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Legislative and Land Tenure
25 Committee Meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m. and welcomed those present.

26
27 2. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the March 8, 2024, Meeting**

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29 **MOTION:** Christopher Robinson moved to APPROVE the March 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes. Erin
30 Mendenhall seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

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32 **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

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34 1. **The Committee will Discuss the Activities that Transpired Between the March 8, 2024,**
35 **Meeting and Today’s Meeting.**

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37 Mayor Silvestrini reported that at the last Legislative and Land Tenure Committee Meeting, there was
38 discussion about actions that will move the work of the Committee forward. He had the opportunity
39 to discuss the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area (“CWNCRA”) Act with
40 members of the Congressional Delegation. There was a longer conversation with Representative John
41 Curtis since he was a past sponsor. The message he received from the Congressional Delegation is
42 that the Legislation will not move forward without the support of the State Legislature and the
43 Governor. It was suggested that there be continued efforts to obtain support on that level.

44
45 Mayor Silvestrini reported that there was discussion with Representative Curtis about what it might
46 take to obtain support from the State Legislature and the Governor. He also had a meeting with Ralph
47 Becker about this matter. After the last Legislative and Land Tenure Committee Meeting, Mr. Becker
48 reached out to share some of the things that were done before. For instance, bringing Legislators to

1 the canyons to see the area for themselves. Mr. Becker informed him that this was done in the past,
2 but he felt it was worth doing again since there has been some turnover. Mayor Silvestrini also spoke
3 to Representative Doug Owens, who stated that he is willing to help organize that kind of visit.
4

5 Laura Briefer shared an update on the conversations had with the resorts. There were discussions
6 with the four ski resorts about a number of issues, including the CWNCRRA. It seems there is a
7 willingness on the resort side to talk about the Legislation as well as potentially looking at the land
8 exchanges again to see if there is an opportunity to put something back on the table. The resorts also
9 mentioned concerns about the Legislation. It sounds like there is still a desire for ski area expansion.
10 It might be best to have another discussion with the ski resorts and environmental community.
11

12 Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen reminded Committee Members of the action items that came out
13 of the previous Legislative and Land Tenure Committee Meeting. At that time, it was determined
14 that Committee Members would speak with the Federal Delegation, which has happened. There was
15 a desire to reach out to members of the State Delegation as well, including Representative Robert
16 Spendlove and Senator Kirk Cullimore, to discuss the organization of a field trip to the area.
17 Following this Legislative and Land Tenure Committee Meeting, CWC Staff can start to organize
18 that field trip. It was previously stated that the field trip would be ideal in mid to late September.
19

20 **STAFF UPDATES**

21 **1. Staff will Discuss the Recent Activities of the CWNCRRA Working Groups.**

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23
24 At the last meeting, it was suggested that CWC Staff work with the ski resorts and the environmental
25 community. Ms. Nielsen reported that this has been done, as there were Working Group Meetings
26 held with both. All four ski resorts from the Cottonwood Canyons attended a Working Group Meeting
27 on April 15, 2024. During that meeting, she shared some background information about the
28 CWNCRRA and there was discussion about each of the resorts. The ski resorts were also asked how
29 they feel the CWNCRRA might fit into what is happening at their resorts. Based on the discussions,
30 the ski resorts are thinking about the potential need for future ski area expansion, water for
31 snowmaking, and transportation. That has not changed much since the CWNCRRA work began.
32

33 On April 16, 2024, there was a Working Group Meeting with the environmental community. This
34 included participants from Save Our Canyons, Wasatch Backcountry Alliance, Friends of Alta,
35 Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter, the Nature Conservancy, and Physicians for a Healthy Environment.
36 During that meeting, background information about the CWNCRRA was shared. Attendees were then
37 asked how they felt about the CWNCRRA. The environmental community likes the bill in general, but
38 there were a lot of questions at the Working Group Meeting about what changed between the time
39 the CWNCRRA was paused and now. Participants wanted to understand what material conditions had
40 changed to indicate there might be more success moving the CWNCRRA forward now.
41

42 Chair Erin Mendenhall noted that there is interest in a field trip from Representative Owens, but
43 wondered whether interest was expressed from Representative Spendlove and Senator Cullimore.
44 Mayor Silvestrini explained that he has not spoken to Senator Cullimore and pointed out that
45 Representative Spendlove will not be there in the future. He noted that there could be a discussion
46 with Representative Spendlove about this matter and offered to reach out. Chair Mendenhall asked
47 if she should wait to reach out to Senator Cullimore until that conversation happens. Mayor Silvestrini
48 thought a parallel track made the most sense. It was determined that the outreach would take place.

1
2 Ms. Nielsen explained that the idea is to reintroduce the idea of the CWNCRRA to Representative
3 Spendlove or his predecessor as well as Senator Cullimore. The intention is to take their temperature
4 and see whether there is support for a field trip to the Cottonwood Canyons. Mayor Silvestrini
5 believed there needs to be someone there to stress the importance of the area as a watershed for
6 communities, such as a representative from Salt Lake City Public Utilities or the Metropolitan Water
7 District of Salt Lake and Sandy. Ms. Briefer noted that 30% of the Sandy water supply comes from
8 Little Cottonwood Canyon. Having the water interests represented could be useful on the field trip.
9

10 Commissioner Christopher Robinson did not think the Legislature will be interested in the CWNCRRA
11 unless the ski resorts are supportive. Mayor Silvestrini agreed with that comment. He added that
12 there needs to be something in it for the State as well. Chair Mendenhall thought it made sense to
13 draft an ideal field trip itinerary. For example, there could be speakers at different locations. It would
14 be better when making the request to Senator Cullimore if there was a sense of who would participate.
15

16 Commissioner Robinson referenced the focuses of the ski resorts, which included the potential need
17 for future ski area expansion, water for snowmaking, and transportation. Those items could bring the
18 ski resorts back to the table. There could then be work with the environmental community to
19 determine whether there is some common ground. If the ski resorts were supportive of the CWNCRRA,
20 a lot more doors would open. Ms. Briefer agreed with that comment. During the ski resort meeting,
21 there were concerns that the Legislation would impact transportation alternatives. However, she
22 pointed out that the Legislation had carve-outs for transportation written in the most recent draft.
23

24 There was discussion about the Mountain Accord process. Commissioner Robinson pointed out that
25 at that time, there was Executive and Legislative branch leadership participating. Something that has
26 been dismissed but might be possible to discuss again is the land exchange component. It fell apart
27 because there were differing expectations on the selected and offered lands. There were also some
28 environmental legacy issues. That being said, if the exchanges could happen, there might be enough
29 economic interest to encourage the ski resorts to support the CWNCRRA in the future.
30

31 Chair Mendenhall asked for more information about the ski resort discussions so far. Ms. Nielsen
32 thought the meeting with the resorts was a necessary first step, but additional clarity is still needed.
33 There can be continued discussions with the resorts as it pertains to interacting and engaging with the
34 Legislation. She did not walk away from the Working Group Meeting thinking that it was not possible
35 to move forward, but in terms of figuring out what each ski resort wants, there is more to be done.
36

37 **LAND CONSERVATION DISCUSSION**

38 39 **1. The Committee will Revisit the Discussion of a Reverse Auction for Land and** 40 **Conservation Across the Central Wasatch Commission's Study Area.** 41

42 During the last Legislative and Land Tenure Committee Meeting, there was discussion about the
43 potential of a reverse auction for specific parcels of land in the CWC study area. However, there
44 were no action items associated with that discussion. Ms. Nielsen explained that the intention is to
45 reopen that discussion and determine whether any specific action items should be assigned.
46

47 Commissioner Robinson pointed out that there needs to be consideration of a strategy for financing.
48 The second thing to consider is how the reverse auction would work. Mayor Silvestrini also believed

1 the financing would be a challenge. Commissioner Robinson noted that there are different Federal
2 funds and watershed protection in the canyons would rank highly. Chair Mendenhall believed the
3 funds would need to be applied for by one of the entities. She never understood why Salt Lake City
4 Public Utilities wouldn't be the body that acquires the land, especially if it addresses watershed
5 protection. Ms. Briefer suggested that it start small. Those interested in selling their lands or selling
6 the development rights on the land for conservation could apply as part of an annual program. She
7 reported that Salt Lake City Public Utilities has between \$7 million and \$9 million in the Watershed
8 Fund currently. She suggested that the CWC see if something like this is feasible in a smaller pilot.
9

10 Commissioner Robinson noted that Salt Lake City Public Utilities already owns a lot of real estate in
11 the canyons and has ready matching funds. It likely has the largest vested interest as well. He
12 recommended that someone at Salt Lake City Public Utilities work to establish a plan. From there, it
13 might be possible to obtain some Federal funds. Salt Lake City Corporation could be a logical
14 applicant. Ms. Briefer explained that are limitations to the Watershed Fund use. The funding can
15 only be used within the designated municipal watershed areas. It is possible to flesh out what a
16 programmatic approach would look like, but it could take time for that kind of work to be done.
17

18 Commissioner Robinson asked about the overlap between the Salt Lake City Public Utilities
19 watershed protection area and the watersheds in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood
20 Canyon. Ms. Briefer explained that everything above the water treatment plant in the canyons would
21 be applicable. Commissioner Robinson thought it would be worthwhile to ask Salt Lake County to
22 be a co-participant. That might be a good way to bring them back into the fold of this work.
23

24 Chair Mendenhall believed the next step for Salt Lake City is to check in with the DC lobby team
25 about potential Federal funds for a reverse auction. Ms. Briefer noted that the updated Watershed
26 Management Plan is being finalized. It will have some recommendations on land conservation. That
27 ultimately needs to be adopted by the Council at the end of the year. Commissioner Robinson asked
28 about the Watershed Fund. He wanted to know if a budget amendment is needed to spend that money
29 or if there is an annual line item. Ms. Briefer denied that there are those kinds of requirements.
30

31 Commissioner Robinson wanted to know if there will be another Working Group Meeting with the
32 ski resorts and environmental community. Ms. Nielsen explained that the environmental community
33 is in favor of the CWNCRRA in general. That being said, there are some specifics that certain
34 organizations in the community would like to see either included or not included in the bill.
35

36 Ms. Nielsen reviewed her action items following the Legislative and Land Tenure Committee
37 Meeting. She needs to follow up with Chair Mendenhall about specific asks for Senator Cullimore.
38 Additionally, she wants to touch base with people from the ski resorts and environmental community
39 so there can be one-on-one conversations about the CWNCRRA. She also wants to look into whether
40 there are Federal funds that the CWC might qualify for in terms of watershed land protection.
41

42 **OTHER BUSINESS**

43
44 *Pat Shea* shared comments with the Committee. In his view, the chances of getting the Legislation
45 through until at least 2030 are non-existent. He spoke to Bekee Hotze and Dave Whittekiend recently.
46 Maps were sent out of the area around the Central Wasatch where there are remnant lands. The
47 Nature Conservancy will work with him to identify the lands that might be swapped. Those would
48 not be swapped with CWC but with SITLA. Mr. Shea suggested approaching the Farm Bureau and

1 others to see if there are people who have decided not to continue their operations. Those people
2 might be interested in having some kind of conservation easement placed on the land for a tax benefit.

3
4 Ms. Nielsen reported that she meets with the U.S. Forest Service on a monthly basis. The next internal
5 meeting is on May 7, 2024. She can bring up the CWNCRRA to them at that time. After the individual
6 conversations with the ski resorts and environmental community, she can determine whether an
7 additional Working Group Meeting should be held that is specific to land exchanges. It would be
8 possible to bring in Committee Members and Forest Service representatives. Ms. Nielsen added that
9 following the Committee Meeting, she will work on a mock run of the show for the potential field
10 trip.

11
12 **CLOSING**

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14 **1. Chair Mendenhall will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Legislative and Land Tenure**
15 **Committee Meeting.**

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17 **MOTION:** Christopher Robinson moved to ADJOURN. Jeff Silvestrini seconded the motion. The
18 motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

19
20 The meeting adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

1 *I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central*
2 *Wasatch Commission Legislative and Land Tenure Committee Meeting held Monday, April 29, 2024.*
3

4 Teri Forbes

5 Teri Forbes

6 T Forbes Group

7 Minutes Secretary

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9 Minutes Approved: _____