

# Unified Economic Opportunity Commission Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2024 · 10:00AM – 11:30AM · Utah State Capitol, Committee Room 445

<https://utah-gov.zoom.us/j/89679360105>

---

**Commission Members Present:** Governor Spencer Cox, Speaker Mike Schultz, Commissioner Lee Perry, Mayor Dawn Ramsey, Ryan Starks, Casey Cameron, Joel Ferry, Margaret Busse, Sophia DiCaro, Craig Buttars, Sydnee Dickson, Scott Cuthbertson\*, Jonathan Freedman\*, Ben Hart\*

---

**Commission Members Excused:** Sen. President J. Stuart Adams, Carlos Braceras, David Damschen, Stephen Lisonbee\*  
\* Non-voting member

---

**Chairs and Presenters:** Sen. Ann Millner, Sen. Scott Sandall, Sen. Lincoln Fillmore, Rep. Stephen Whyte, Sen. Evan Vickers, Sen. Kirk Cullimore, Sen. Chris Wilson, Rep. Robert Spendlove, Rep. Cal Musselman, Rep. Jefferson Moss, Marvin Dodge, Vic Hockett, Kori Ann Edwards, Kyle Palmer

---

## 10:00 AM – Welcome and Opening Remarks, Commission Chair Gov. Spencer J. Cox

Gov. Cox opened the meeting by thanking everyone for their work throughout this year. This commission is important because of its ability to build consensus to address significant challenges.

## 10:05 AM – Overview of Meeting Purpose and Goals, Kyle Palmer

Kyle Palmer thanked everyone who has been a part of this process, acknowledging that it is not a part of anyone's job except for his and his team's. The fact that over 150 people have been involved is really special and one of the most unique parts about Utah.

## 10:10 AM – Working Group on Water, Energy, & Natural Resources, Sen. Scott Sandall, Rep. Casey Snider, & Joel Ferry

Rep. Casey Snider expressed that this group is proud of its hard work this year. He started with the following policy recommendations addressing water issues:

- Water Measuring and Accounting Amendments: Increase metering and telemetry (H.B. 61, Rep. Albrecht)
- Water Related Changes: Create a 20-year water plan (Drafted, Rep. Snider)

- Utah Water Ways Amendments: Increase students' understanding of water (H.B. 62, Rep. Owens)
- Water Modifications: Establish parameters around saved water rights (S.B. 18, Sen. Sandall)
- Greenbelt Amendments: Conserve water by allowing fallow land to temporarily remain greenbelt (In Drafting)

Sen. Scott Sandall continued the group's presentation with policy items addressing energy and natural resources:

- High Cost Infrastructure Development Tax Credit Amendments: Expand the HCITC to more businesses in Utah that make significant infrastructure investments in energy delivery systems, water systems, roads, transmission, and pipelines (H.B. 124, Rep. Albrecht)
- Mineral Exploration: Expand the Mineral Exploration Tax Credit in order to incentivize mineral exploration, extraction, and processing (Drafted, Sen. Owens)
- Clean Energy Amendments: Value nuclear power as clean energy throughout Utah statute (Drafted, Rep. Albrecht)
  - There are no barriers in statute, but "nuclear" is not currently listed as being clean
- Utah Energy Act Amendments: Create a process for addressing federal rules and regulations which negatively impact Utah's energy resources (H.B. 48, Rep. Jack)

Exec. Dir. Joel Ferry presented the group's funding recommendations:

- Agricultural Water Demonstration: Create an Agricultural Water Demonstration Facility for research and on-farm drip and surge irrigation demonstrations
- Aqueduct Resilience: Upgrade pipelines in each of the four primary Wasatch Front aqueducts to meeting modern seismic engineering standards and ensure the likelihood that water service would continue after a major earthquake
- Dam Safety & Sedimentation: Accelerate urgent dam safety upgrades for the over 100 high-risk dams in the state through the High Hazard Dam Safety Upgrade Program and initiate a Reservoir Sedimentation Program
- Ridgeline to Shoreline Watershed Restoration: Improve watershed health, protect and improve water quality, and increase water yield
- Utah Geological Survey Mapping Assets: Increase the ability of the Utah Geological Survey to map mineral assets, emphasizing economic evaluation
- San Rafael Energy Research: Allow the Office of Energy Development to acquire the San Rafael Energy Research Center and operate it as a state-owned entity

Gov. Cox commented that some of these bills have already been drafted and thanked the group for their work.

### **10:15 AM – Subcommittee on Women in the Economy, Sen. Luz Escamilla & Rep. Karianne Lisonbee**

Rep. Karianne Lisonbee said that she is grateful for the collaboration of women around the state to make these recommendations. She presented the following policy items:

- Child Tax Credit Modifications: Expand the Child Tax Credit to include children four years of age and younger (H.B. 153, Rep. Pulsipher)
- Math Education Enhancement: Direct USBE to train math coaches in best teaching practices and develop layered deployment of coaches throughout the state (In Drafting, Rep. Lesser)
- Skill-Based Hiring Amendments: Prevent questions on salary history in the hiring process for public employees (In Drafting, Rep. Lesser)
- Childcare Private-Public Partnership: Modify vacant state-owned properties to meet DHHS licensing requirements for childcare centers
  - State partners with businesses to allow them access to the space
  - Businesses contract with Utah-based daycare providers to establish a daycare center with a no-cost lease
  - 60% capacity will serve children of partner business
  - 40% capacity will serve children of state employees and community members
  - In this public-private partnership, the incentive is the daycare location, not a direct cash transfer
  - In drafting, Sen. Escamilla

She finished with the group's administrative item:

- One-Stop Shop for Business Licenses: Streamline small business development by working with the Department of Commerce and the Division of Technology Services in their efforts to create a one-stop shop for obtaining business licenses online

Commissioner Lee Perry asked whether Sen. Escamilla's bill will look at encouraging childcare facilities to start offering 24-hour daycare. He said that in his county and other manufacturing areas, families struggle to find daycare during the nighttime and early morning hours.

Lisonbee said this issue is absolutely being looked at, mentioning that first responders often need daycare during these hours as well.

### **10:20 AM – Subcommittee on Talent, Education, & Industry Alignment, Sen. Ann Millner**

Vic Hockett thanked everyone involved in the work of Talent Ready Utah, including the Legislature for funding critical efforts. He presented the group's policy recommendation:

- Youth Apprenticeship System & Governance Pilot Policy: Solidify statewide governance structure for youth apprenticeships (In Drafting, Sen. Millner)

He continued with their funding items:

- Life Sciences Workforce Initiative
- Computer Science for Utah: Generative & Predictive AI
- Talent Ready Connections Program
- Behavioral Health Program Expansions in Higher Education

The group has worked with hundreds of stakeholders to put together these recommendations and narrow down a list which was originally much longer.

### **10:25 AM – Subcommittee on Housing Affordability, Sen. Lincoln Fillmore & Rep. Stephen Whyte**

Rep. Stephen Whyte said that "housing affordability" means different things to different people. The subcommittee has put together a list of proposals that reflect diverse approaches to this multifaceted issue. He began with the following policy items:

- Housing Affordability Amendments and Revisions:
  - Statewide building code for modular housing
  - State funds as incentives for good local housing planning
  - Utah First Homes Program: Boost 'starter home' production
  - Private Transfer Fee Obligations
  - RDA/CRA flexibility to share resources between cities and invest in homeownership
  - State Infrastructure Funding to facilitate housing production
  - Olene Walker membership modification – Add Modular Representative
- Land Use, Development, and Management Act Modifications:
  - Subdivisions cleanup
  - Landscaping bonds
  - Sidewalk phasing
  - Subdivisions phasing
  - Development agreements
  - Landings/setbacks

- Design standards exception
- Annexation
- State coordinate system

He continued with the following funding items:

Ongoing

- Attainable Housing Grants
- Olene Walker Loan Fund GAP Financing
- Homeless Shelter Cities Mitigation
- Two Full Time Staff
- Moderate Income Housing Plan Program Specialist
- Appropriations Program Specialist

One-time

- Deeply Affordable Housing Grants Program
- Utah Housing Preservation Fund

He finished with a proposal for a new ongoing source:

- Homeless Dedicated Funding Source

Together, these recommendations make a multifaceted, multi-year approach so that Utahns can achieve the American Dream of homeownership. This work addresses ways to increase the supply of homes in order to meet demands.

Sen. Lincoln Fillmore thanked the Governor for prioritizing housing. This statewide issue will require a statewide solution.

Gov. Cox agreed that it is a statewide problem and added that it is a nationwide problem as well. No one has figured this out yet; he is convinced that if it can be done, it can be done here.

### **10:30 AM – Working Group on Technology, Innovation, Investment, Rep. Jefferson Moss, Sen. Chris Wilson, & Ryan Starks**

Rep. Jefferson Moss presented the group's policy items:

- Consumer Privacy Amendments: Create a learning laboratory for AI and advance consumer protections (In Drafting, Sen. Cullimore)
- Data Privacy Amendments: Protect data privacy with a privacy plan and clear government requirements (In Drafting, Rep. J. Moss)

- Behavioral Health Licensing Amendments: Establish bridge programs to fill critical workforce gaps and enable talented, qualified individuals to practice in Utah (S.B. 26, Sen. Bramble)

He finished with funding items:

- Manufacturing Modernization Grant: Continue funding the Manufacturing Modernization Grant, which enables manufacturers, especially those in Utah's targeted industries, to upgrade their machinery or processes to remain competitive
- Innovation Lab: Move remaining Fund of Funds dollars to the Utah Innovation Lab to sustain the development of innovative technology for the future
- International Talent: Expand talent strategies to include international students hiring using Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Ryan Starks commented on the effectiveness of the Manufacturing Modernization Grant in helping small manufacturers in the state to succeed.

Margaret Busse added that there will be a cleanup bill to ensure that international talent can be leveraged by clearing pathways.

**10:35 AM – Working Group on Government Efficiency, Sen. Evan Vickers, Rep. Robert Spendlove, & Marvin Dodge**

Rep. Robert Spendlove thanked stakeholders and executive branch members for their contributions. He presented the following policy items:

- Boards and Commissions Amendments: Create criteria for boards and commissions (In Drafting, Sen. McCay)
- State Boards and Commissions Amendments: Comprehensive review of duplicative and inactive boards and commissions (H.B. 72, Rep. Musselman)
- Multicounty Appraisal Trust Revisions: Administer property taxes more efficiently through the MCAT system (In Drafting, Rep. Dailey-Provost)

Marvin Dodge presented the group's recommendation to continue funding the state's customer service efforts:

- Customer Service Experience: Secure funding for a Qualtrics cloud license and a four-person team to administer the program

He added that as part of the MCAT policy item, aerial imagery will require a little more investment.

Sen. Evan Vickers added that he appreciated the opportunity to work with this group over the summer. The boards and commissions items will be especially important. Gov. Cox agreed.

Busse said that the state has over 70 advisory boards, so there is a lot of room for consolidation. Gov. Cox added that doing this will break down silos.

**10:40 AM – Working Group on Growth & Transportation, Sen. Kirk Cullimore, Rep. Calvin Musselman, & Carlos Braceras**

Rep. Calvin Musselman presented the group's policy recommendations:

- Transportation Utility Fee: Place reasonable guardrails around the Transportation Utility Fee (Drafted, Rep. K. Peterson)
- State Infrastructure Bank Expansion: Fund and create flexibilities in the State Infrastructure Bank
- Infrastructure Financing Districts: Encourage housing supply with the creation of infrastructure financing districts (H.B. 13, Dunnigan)
- Outdoor Recreation Grant Funding Eligibility: Increase investment in parks and open space by aligning relevant programs and incentivizing good local planning (In Drafting)
- Modify County Option: Invest in open space by modifying the ZAP/RAP county option to better match bond repayment schedules (In Drafting)
- Alignment Resolution: Encourage consideration of cross-issue growth impacts when making decisions with regard to funding, policy, and programs (In Drafting)

Sen. Kirk Cullimore presented the group's funding recommendations:

- Comprehensive Housing Capacity, Infrastructure, and Market Analysis: Conduct an analysis on likely and desired growth, capacity, and market infrastructure investment to better inform policymakers
- Local Grants Assistance: Assist local governments in pursuing federal grant opportunities such as the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program and the Discretionary Grant Program for Charging and Fueling Infrastructure
- Transit Innovation Grants: Increase ridership on Utah's public transit system by allowing communities to design and operate pilot programs that address their local needs

Speaker Mike Schultz said that growth is the biggest concern he and other legislators are hearing from their constituents. He mentioned the importance of focusing on homeownership. He related an experience he had early on working on transportation.

Leaders at the time were concerned that they would not be able to build the roads to support Utah's growth. Schultz believes the state has done a good job of improving its multimodal transportation options since then, but said that we need to keep moving in that direction, because the need is outpacing us.

#### **10:45 AM – Discussion and Motions**

##### **Motion**

*"I move to forward these recommendations to legislative committees for consideration in the 2024 legislative session. I further move to direct UEOC staff to work with the legislature on these topics."*

Motion: Sophie DiCaro

Second: Commissioner Lee Perry

Motion carried unanimously

#### **11:05 AM – Approval of Minutes**

##### **Motion**

*"I move to approve the October 18, 2023 meeting minutes of the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission."*

Motion: Commissioner Lee Perry

Second: Mayor Dawn Ramsey

Motion carried unanimously

##### **Motion**

*"I move to disband all Working Groups with the thanks of the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission."*

Motion: Speaker Mike Schultz

Second: Ryan Starks

Motion carried unanimously

Schultz spoke to the final motion, saying that he has had the opportunity to watch over the last few years as this commission and its working groups have worked to produce phenomenal results. Most importantly, the work has been done in the right way: Through collaboration. He expressed appreciation for the success of the last three years.

#### **11:10 AM – Programming Note, Ryan Starks & Kori Ann Edwards**

Starks shared with commissioners the bittersweet news that UEOC Director Kyle Palmer will be leaving the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity. He has been a tremendous asset as the architect behind the UEOC. If this were a startup, he would be the CEO—and the commission and its partners the investors. He noted that the return on their investment has been great and wished Palmer the best.

Kori Ann Edwards shared a few words that came to mind about Palmer when she was thinking about how to say goodbye: Skilled, dedicated, organized, smart, honorable, fun, friendly, caring, ethical, loyal, esteemed, delightful, and a true friend. She thanked him for being the Inaugural Director of the UEOC and for leaving the State of Utah better than he found it.

Abby Hunsaker reminded commissioners of Natalie Gochmour's presentation at the beginning of the year about being "keepers of the flame." On this team, we have seen Palmer as a keeper of Utah's flame. She presented him with an award and complimented him as a kind and compassionate boss who helped her to find purpose.

Palmer recounted the first conversations he had with Ben Hart about this job, saying that although he had no idea what he was getting himself into at time, it has turned out to be a great adventure. He thanked his team, the commission, and its partners. To work at things that are meaningful to improve the lives of others, and to do so with people that he calls friends and loves, has been so special.

#### **11:25 AM – Concluding Remarks: Governor Cox, Speaker Wilson, President Adams**

Gov. Cox said that sometimes doing these things becomes "the norm," but he hopes we will not take it for granted. It is easy to assume that it has always been this way and always will be—but we have to be intentional about it, and it takes good people who are willing to use their time to do the hard work. It's much harder to bring people together to find solutions that serve more people. He thanked the commission's legislative colleagues for being part of this.

#### **11:30 AM – Adjourn**