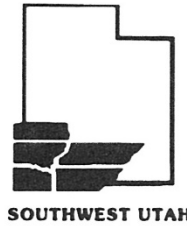


**[MINUTES APPROVED ON APRIL 24, 2024]**

## **Five County Association of Governments**

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### **MINUTES**

#### **STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2024, AT 12:00 P.M.**

**MEETING HELD AT FESTIVAL HALL; COMBINED ROOMS 5 & 6; 105 N. 100 E., CEDAR CITY, UTAH**

**MEETING WAS ALSO AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS ONLY VIA A ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE**

#### **MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

#### **REPRESENTING**

Commissioner Celeste Meyeres  
Commissioner Paul Cozzens  
Commissioner Gil Almquist  
Commissioner Wade Hollingshead  
Commissioner Jerry Taylor  
Escalante City Mayor Melani Torgersen  
Cedar City Mayor Garth Green  
Orderville Town Mayor Lyle Goulding  
Mr. Tyler Fails (via ZOOM)  
Ms. Lisa Livingston (via ZOOM)  
Ms. Becki Bronson [non-voting member]

Kane County Commission  
Iron County Commission  
Washington County Commission  
Beaver County Commission  
Garfield County Commission  
Garfield County Mayors  
Iron County Mayors  
Kane County Mayors  
Beaver County School Board  
Kane County School Board  
Assistant VP, Community and  
Government Relations, SUU

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

#### **REPRESENTING**

Mr. Bryan Thiriot  
Mr. Gary Zabriskie

Mr. Cody Christensen  
Ms. Kim Cooper

Mr. Gary Webster  
Mr. Kyle Wilson  
Ms. Tani Downing  
Ms. Cindy Bulloch (via ZOOM)  
Mr. Patrick Morrison

Five County AOG Executive Director  
Five County AOG Deputy Director/Chief  
Technology Officer/Director of Community and  
Economic Development  
Five County AOG Associate Planner  
Five County AOG Community Action Partnership  
Director  
Senator Mike Lee  
Senator Mitt Romney  
Congresswoman Celeste Maloy  
Congresswoman Celeste Maloy  
Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation

**BEAVER**

**GARFIELD**

**IRON**

**KANE**

**WASHINGTON**

**I. Welcome by the Outgoing Chair – Introductions of all participating.**

Steering Committee Chair, Mayor Celeste Meyeres, welcomed all to the Five County Association of Governments Steering Committee meeting, calling the meeting to order at 12:22 p.m. She stated that the location of the meeting as Festival Hall in Cedar City, and the date being March 13, 2024.

She mentioned that this welcome is her final action as Chair, Chair, moved on to Agenda Item #II and asked Commissioner Celeste Meyeres if she had any parting comments as the outgoing Chair.

**II. Comments by Outgoing Chair and the Formal Rotation of the Chair to Washington County and Vice Chair to Iron County.**

Commissioner Meyeres thanked everyone for their patience this past year as she said she was new to the County Commission and new to this assignment, and new to being chair. She said that she appreciated everyone.

In her finally action as Chair, she officially turned the meeting over to the Chair for the next year, Commissioner Gil Almquist of Washington County, who then thanked Commissioner Meyeres for doing a great job, and said the Committee appreciates her introspection on things that helped the Committee dig deeper because of her. He thanked her for helping them all to be more aware. Commissioner Almquist, as Chair, said he appreciates the opportunity in the rotation to serve as Chair.

**III. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Chair asked Mayor Goulding to lead everyone in the pledge allegiance.

**IV. Review and Approve Draft Minutes from January 10, 2024 Steering Committee meeting.**

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the Chair said this agenda item was to review and approve the draft minutes from the January 10, 2024 Steering Committee meeting. He said that this required a motion and a vote. He asked if there was any discussion, or amendments or changes to the draft minutes needed? After not seeing any, he asked for a motion.

**Mayor Melani Torgersen made a motion to approve the Minutes from January 10, 2024 Steering Committee meeting as presented. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Wade Hollingshead.**

The Chair called for a vote. The voting was unanimous in favor of the motion and the minutes were approved.

**V. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Rating and Ranking Presentation and Approval.**

The Chair turned the time over to Mr. Cody Christensen, Associate Planner at the Association, and manager of the Community Development Block Grant Program in this region.

Mr. Christensen went over this year's projects. He said that the first one on the list is a fire truck for Newcastle. He said that last year we had an emergency application for Newcastle Fire for a fire truck, and explained that that amount will come off of the top of this year's applications, as that was approved by the Steering Committee last year. He said that it was roughly \$300,000. He said that he didn't know what the final number was yet as he hadn't got that from the state staff. He said they're still giving the final numbers on that. He said that the next application was from Cedar City Housing Authority for property acquisition and then the other application was from Brian Head Town for fire station improvements for an exhaust system for their fire station when they start their trucks. He said there is nothing to pull the exhaust out of the station, so they're getting a system to do that.

He said that the total estimated CDBG allocation for the region is about \$1,031,456. He said that we are projecting out for about \$1,035,000, so we're close to funding everything this year. He asked if anyone had any questions on the projects?

Mr. Zabriskie mentioned that if anyone is interested in the scoring, they can get hold of Cody Christensen and he can go through the scoring matrix. He said that there are 19 questions on the scoring matrix and that's how the points are added up from that matrix. He said that the total points are shown on the second column of the handout, 82 points for the Cedar Housing Authority project and 61 for the Brian Head project. He said that if there had been more projects they would have been similarly shown down the list.

Mr. Christensen explained these were the only eligible applications submitted this year. Mr. Zabriskie explained that this region gets a fair share from the overall state CDBG pot of funds. Mr. Christensen said that they have got a pretty good system in place. He said that our region is second or third most, as we get a pretty good chunk from the population primarily. He said that it is a pretty complex formula, but our region gets a pretty good chunk.

The Chair stated that this requires a motion and a vote.

**A motion to approve this year's Rating and Ranking of this year's Community Development Block grant applications, as presented, was made by Commissioner Jerry Taylor. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Paul Cozzens.**

The Chair called for a vote. The voting was unanimous in favor of the motion and thus the CDBG Ranking and Ranking, as presented, was approved.

## **VI. CDBG Set-aside Funding for FCAOG.**

The Chair moved on to the next item which is CDBG set-aside funding for Five County. This was also presented by Mr. Christensen, who enlisted Mr. Bryan Thiriot to help on this one. He mentioned that we this region has been short on applications for the last couple of years for whatever reason, and Mr. Thiriot and he had discussed on several occasions about possibly setting aside next year's CDBG funding to help the AOG with the purchase of a building in Cedar City. Mr. Thiriot said that our current space up in Cedar is good with Iron County, but said it would be nice for us to have more of our services directed out of Cedar City. Mr. Zabriskie added that the AOG office building in St. George building was purchased through a CDBG set-aside long ago back in 2001. Mr. Thiriot said that we just see the future growing here in Cedar City as a central location for the region as well so that's a thought we've got. He said that we already have buildings here for services at several different locations with HEAT and other services and we'd like to bring them into one location and have a location for this meeting, so we thought this would be a good year, and a good way to do it, so we thought we could have a discussion with this body and see if that's something that they'd like to do going forward.

Mr. Thiriot added that we are not changing our name. We're going keep our name. We like Five County. He said our neighboring AOG north of us changed their name to R6 and we're not changing to R5. He said that Five County Association of Governments is a good name for us here. He said that also to go along with this discussion is that Cedar City and Iron County in the next seven years is looking at an MPO coming into this area, so staff would increase. He said that at this point we don't know specific building costs or what it would cost to operate so that something we need to look at. He said that we will put that together and identify what our funding source would be to get us started with that process. The Chair said that the set-aside funding, without knowing what the funding is, is just a placeholder because we don't know any dollar amount. Mr. Zabriskie explained that he is the old guy on the block and was deeply involved with then Executive Director John S. Williams on the acquisition of the building where we are at, back in 2002. He said that it was the CDBG grant year that Mr. Williams went to this board and asked for them to set aside all the CDBG funds that year for that building. Mr. Zabriskie said that because of that, we were able to acquire the AOG office for just over \$900,000 in 2002, once it was constructed. He said that the drop-dead date for making a decision on a set-aside would be the August meeting because that set-aside would need to go into the CDBG Application Guidebook that goes out for the year. He said that at that time we would notify communities that there is not going to be a how to apply workshop, if that decision was made. He said that the decision on the set-aside probably doesn't need to be made today. He said that this is more of a discussion at this time.

Mr. Thiriot said that staff would work between now and the August meeting, which would need to be when the rubber would have to hit the road on whether this board would be comfortable with the numbers that staff brings to you. He said that between now and then, it would be determined if it's even feasible, and staff will need to talk to building owners, realtors, architects and contractors to find out could something that would serve our needs be in the price range we could afford. Mr. Zabriskie also said that we will also

have to look at possibly CIB participation in it at some point, but we know the situation with CIB, too, so I don't think a decision needs to be made today, but we just want to open the discussion primarily.

Mr. Zabriskie said he thought it would be fine to table it, because that decision doesn't have to be made now. If a decision was to be made to do that, it would have to be made no later than the August meeting, because that must go then to the State CDBG Policy Committee, which meets in September, and that's when it can be made formal there.

The Chair asked the Steering Committee members that were present to see if there was a consensus to table this decision until a later meeting.

**See that it was the consensus, he used the prerogative of the Chair to table this item.**

The Chair said that this matter will be tabled until the next appropriate meeting once the needed information is available, and staff brings back additional information.

## **VII. Utah Permanent Community Impact Fund Board (CIB) Application Reviews.**

Mr. Zabriskie said there are two CIB applications in this third and final trimester of the fiscal year that applied before the February 1, 2024 deadline. He said that they were both planning grants. He said that CIB funds planning and studies, like water feasibility studies and different studies like that. He explained that one application came from Iron County and is a feasibility study on whether a creation of an Iron County Fire District, whether it be county-wide or a focused area in the county is the best practice and would it be feasible and sustainable. He said that is what this feasibility study would do, determine if that is the best approach going forward, instead of the way it is now. He explained that currently Cedar City protects their own city as well as a couple of nearby communities that contract with Cedar City for their fire protection. He said that other than those, there are volunteer fire departments within the unincorporated county, and he said that he believes they are funded out of the general fund along with fundraisers, donut sales, cake sales and that kind of stuff. He said that there are also volunteer fire departments in the incorporated communities of Parowan and Paragonah.

Mr. Zabriskie said other areas of the state, and specifically down in Washington County, they have looked at fire districts that cover good portions of the county because then they have the ability of collecting a tax levy, a small tax for people that don't have things built on the property, and a somewhat larger tax levy for things that are developed and that's what funds all the improvements to their fire stations and fire equipment so they have good fire protection. Mr. Zabriskie said that that is the gist of the first application here and they're requesting \$25,000. He said that CIB matches cash 50%-50% so the estimated total project cost for that study would be \$50,000. They are asking CIB for \$25,000 as a grant to match the County's \$25,000.

Mr. Zabriskie said that the second application to be reviewed is LaVerkin City and they're doing a secondary water master plan, impact fee facilities plan, and an impact fee analysis.

He said that they have a secondary water system in LaVerkin, but the secondary system doesn't cover all the areas of town. He explained that in the new developed areas, there's a need to collect impact fees on that new construction areas to expand the secondary system. He said that this is a very comprehensive study that they're doing, and impact fee analysis is so that as they grow as a community, they do not have to treat water that comes out of the culinary system for irrigating outdoor things, lawns and landscapes and that. Mr. Zabriskie made it clear that this is not for irrigation for farmer's fields and things like that, but is strictly for irrigating yards. He said that the city is working hand-in-hand with the Washington County Water Conservancy District because secondary systems really make the water more affordable because you don't treat the water for secondary systems. He said that the City is asking for a \$46,000 CIB grant and they're matching it with \$46,000 from LaVerkin City.

Mr. Zabriskie said that when CIB applications are made by eligible entities in our region we are asked to bring these to the Steering Committee to vet these as whether you support these projects, whether you remain neutral, or do not support, so that's what the motion should be, is if you support it, make a motion to support the projects. He explained that, as planning projects, these do not go in front of the CIB board. They are reviewed by state CIB staff and if they meet a criteria list where there is like ten different questions that are asked in an interview that's done by the state staff, and if the majority of the questions are answered yes on those, then they are automatically funded through a set-aside that the CIB board has done for planning projects.

Mr. Zabriskie said that those are the two projects for the Steering Committee to review. He said that those are the two to be vetted and it requires a motion and vote.

The Chair called for a motion.

**Commissioner Celeste Meyers made a motion to support both of the CIB applications as presented.**

Cedar City Mayor Garth Green asked to have some discussion on the Iron County application. Mayor Green asked Commissioner Cozzens what his feelings are about a county fire district. Commissioner Cozzens said he knows it's been talked about. He thinks there might be some pros to it but said he can't say that he has studied it in real depth, but knows it has been bantered around. Mayor Green explained that they are right in the middle of the City's budget season. He said that the Cedar City Fire Department handles Cedar City, Kanarrville, Enoch, and the county out in the valley. He said that there is Newcastle that has a fire department and a fire truck, and there is Brian Head. He said that he didn't know what Paragonah does, but said he assumed Parowan has a fire department and handles Paragonah. He asked Commissioner Cozzens if that was correct. Commissioner Cozzens stated that he believes so. Mayor Green said he was wondering about Beryl Junction and whether that area is handled by Newcastle. Commissioner Cozzens said that there are two fire stations, one in Beryl Junction, and one in Newcastle. He said that there is a volunteer fire department for each and there is a chief for both stations out there. Mayor Green asked if they were full-time chiefs? Commissioner Cozzens answered that they were both part-time, very part-time. Mayor Green wondered

what is being gained? He also asked what does creating a district do. Mr. Zabriskie said that this fire district study isn't to create a district. It is investigating as to whether the fire protection in Iron County as a whole is as optimum as it could be? Mayor Green stated that a fire department right next to you is never good enough. He said we are going to spend \$50,000 to study whether we are to do it. He wondered how the county commissioner feels about funding the study for it. Commissioner Cozzens answered that he would probably be in favor. Mr. Zabriskie said of course Cedar City should be a participant in that study because the City is the 800-pound gorilla in the room. He said that participating doesn't in any way mandate anything as far as what Cedar City would do, but there may be benefits to Cedar City if it was involved in being in the study. Mr. Zabriskie said that is definitely necessary. He said that Cedar City would not be funding the study, but would be invited to provide valuable input into that study and the study should look at what the City's capabilities are and what it is currently doing. Mr. Zabriskie said that his concern, and he said this has been an ongoing concern in Washington County, and also in some of the other rural areas we have in our region, is if they were to join together, some of these small communities, and form a fire district, then they can have the purchasing power together, they can share equipment, they can share manpower, which they're already doing, but they're not collecting anything. Mayor Green said they want the taxes. Mr. Zabriskie said, yes, that is one significant benefit of being a fire district. He said that the small rural volunteer fire departments can't collect a tax, but that's not the sole reason why you would do this. He said that they would be doing this for the betterment of protection of citizens. Commissioner Cozzens said he wondered if it would help with ISO ratings? Commissioner Almquist said that they have got several smaller districts and then of course the incorporated areas that often respond to those districts like Cedar would help out some unincorporated area. He said that their efforts to combine up Highway 18 was completely abandoned because it was almost biblical in their hatred of each other. He said that the County told them they were not going to force them to work together. He said that they did a study. He said for Iron County to be very careful who they choose and give them some specifics up front because the study that they asked for they wanted the study to draw a conclusion to say whether they should join together, or shouldn't. He said what they got was essentially an inventory of equipment and volunteer personnel. He said to be clear on exactly the expectations of the outcome from the study so that doesn't happen here. Mr. Zabriskie said that in Washington County there are several smaller districts, but it also has the Hurricane Valley Fire District, which is a very large one, which covers all of the east part of the county, Hurricane, and all the way from the edge of Washington City, all the way clear to Toquerville, as well as Virgin and Leeds. Commissioner Almquist said that the Hurricane Valley district responds to a lot of accidents and vehicle fires along I-15. He said that the Hurricane Valley District there is large and very well run. He said that they have seen some great economies of scale advantages. He said that there is a definite advantage of that because they took over Rockville and Virgin. He said that if you went door-to-door there, they would all say, it's so much better. He said that because they did have the muscle to go up there and have personnel there and more equipment. He said that Rockville and Virgin were absorbed in an economy of scale situation. He said that they are closer to the hub then you might say Beryl Junction and Newcastle is to Cedar City. He said that there's some buying power also with grants, ISO is a factor, and of course the tax implication of applying it to those areas that can be taxed. Mayor Green said that his concern is always on these studies is that

they seem to be: ready, set, go!, but nobody's ready to run it. He said that if the fire departments in these villages said they see some opportunities in this and would like to do it, that would be great. He said that if the county wants to fund a study, he doesn't have a problem, but he said he always worries when you come with the study and then says, okay we had the study done, and now we need to do all these things that the cities have to fund. Mayor Green said he is sure their fire chief, and said he was going to speak very bluntly, would love a study in anything that gives them more ammunition to come to a mayor for more money and to expand and to grow and to empire build and to do these things. He said that seems like it's an inherent thing in their fire department that they want to get bigger, they want 12 more full-time firemen, they want more of a \$20 million fire station out at Hamilton Fort and all of these things that they want to do. He said if you load the ammo it makes it harder for him to resist the barrage when they come and say well yeah we have paid \$50,000 for this study, so you need to fund a million to do what they think we ought to do, and they are ready to go, and we have a study to back it up. He said he doesn't know whether the cities are ready, and the cities are ready for a new tax, and are the fire departments ready for combining and joining? He also opined on whether they like their autonomy by having their own chiefs. The Mayor said he thinks the study should identify all those answers. Mr. Zabriskie said that this would not be a strategic plan of how you get there, as that would come at a later point. He said the decision is going to be a political decision, and it's going to be a financial decision, but that would be at a later time. He said what one needs is a study that gives you information on whether to even go on to that next step, which would then develop a strategic plan, which would set up timing and funding. The Mayor said that when a fire district is established it becomes a taxing entity, and when the fire district starts raising taxes they're going to yell at Paul [Cozzens] and they're going to yell at the mayor of whatever city, when the taxes start going up, and neither one of them had anything to do with it. He said if Commissioner Cozzens and the county ask for it, and there's support in the communities, and they want to have a tax in the district and want to grow and build a big fire department out there, that's great. He said he was not really excited about building Cedar City's fire department any time soon. Mr. Zabriskie said a district would not be created unless it was created by a political entity. Mayor Green said it gives ammunition to those who want to build it bigger, who want to somehow get on the tax rolls to build something bigger. He said that he doesn't know whether the people want the tax to be on the tax rolls for that. He said maybe they do. He said if they do, then there's your vote. Mr. Zabriskie explained that the Hurricane Valley Fire Protection District was created as a political subdivision of the county. He said that, in other words, the County created it, but there was truth in taxation stuff. He said that, in other words, it wasn't established until the public knew this is what they were doing. Commissioner Cozzens asked Mr. Zabriskie if he knew who submitted this? Mr. Zabriskie said that this was discussed last year when the entities participated in the CIB prioritization list meeting and Commissioner Bleak was there at the meeting. Commissioner Cozzens said that Commissioner Bleak is more involved in this than he is. Mr. Zabriskie again said that this is just a study, and it's just to determine if it is feasible, is it even in the realm of things? He said this is not a strategic plan, which would need to come, if it's determined that it's even feasible. He said that there are several companies, and he gave that information, that's where they came up with this dollar amount. These firms study fire areas where there's no current fire protection and you brought these volunteer fire departments together, they know how



to look at what the capabilities are, what the distances traveled to fires, the value of the properties being protected that's how they come up with whether or not a district would be self-sustainable. Commissioner Cozzens asked Mayor Green how Cedar City feels about doing the interlocal agreements with all these entities like Enoch and New Harmony, etc. Mayor Green said that the the villages seem to like it because they don't have to put a fire department together. He said that he struggles because we have Enoch with 8,000 people and no fire station, but we want to put one at Hamilton Fort to cover Kanarraville. He said that they have a lot of people out there (in Enoch), but they don't have any interest in putting up any more money, so the fire department doesn't seem to be very interested in that. He said that these communities seem to like it. He said that they come to our meetings and say that these interlocal agreements are great. They seem to like it, Enoch and Kanaraville seem to like it, and he said he thinks the county agrees that they like it, too. The Chair, seeing no further discussion looked to the maker of the motion.

**Commissioner Celeste Meyeres stated that her motion stands.**

The Chair asked if there was a second?

**Commissioner Paul Cozzens seconded the motion.**

The Chair stated that there is a motion and a second to support both CIB applications as presented. He said the Committee has had some good discussion. He called for a vote. The vote was unanimous, and the motion was adopted.

The Chair said that his suggestion stands to get the right company and tell them to have the right results, so you get what you want.

#### **VIII. A-95 Areawide Clearinghouse Reviews of SITLA Projects.**

Mr. Zabriskie presented two A-95 clearinghouse reviews. He said that the first was for a rangeland improvement project called the Burn Knoll and Blue Mountain Pipeline and Trough project. He said that this is a Beaver County project and it's part of a larger project that they're doing there, a water project. He said that it is 10,500 feet of livestock waterline and one water trough on trust lands that the grazing community will put in. He said he contacted the Beaver County Commissioners, and they were unanimous in support of it, so the recommendation is that the Steering Committee support this. Mr. Zabriskie said he did want to make a point here and said he was getting out on a soapbox for a minute. He said that the comment deadline was February 29, 2024, and we didn't receive the notification until February 26, 2024, three days before the deadline for comments. He said that if we ever get SITLA back in here in-person, would the Steering Committee please grill them on why they cannot give adequate comment time? He said that is more of a political thing, so he said he'd get off his soapbox.

He said the second review is one the Committee can do separately, or together with the first, and this one is the West Canyon Pipeline in Kane County. He said that, likewise, it's a water pipeline to distribute water to cattle throughout the year. It is about 8,000 feet of pipeline, a water trough, and a 17,000 gallon tank. He said that the comment deadline is

the very next day, so he will send this one to them, but we did, likewise, didn't get notification of this until February 29<sup>th</sup>. He said he contacted the commissioners in Kane County, and they're also in support of this, so the recommendation by staff to the Steering Committee is that a motion be made to support both of these A-95 Clearinghouse Reviews. He said that he will send those comments and the recommendation from this body to SITLA. The Chair called for a motion.

**Commissioner Taylor motioned that the Steering Committee support both of the A-95 Area-wide Clearinghouse reviews. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hollingshead.**

The motion to support these projects passed unanimously.

#### **IX. Utah Outdoor Recreation Initiative Presentation/Discussion.**

The Chair invited Mr. Patrick Morrison to introduce himself. Mr. Morrison said that he is the grant program manager with the Utah Division of Recreation in the Department of Natural Resources. He said he loves the five-county area in his work as a grant program manager. He said that this area has the most amazing type of recreation we have in the state, and they have been really fortunate to support a lot of projects, and they have just been able to support a lot of things. He said that they just finished their first year and saw a lot of investment into this area. He gave a quick 10,000 foot view of the program. He then said he wanted to get into what ultimately he wanted to talk to the Steering Committee the most about, regional recreation councils, that he is hoping to set up.

He explained that they have a Utah General Recreation Grant, as well as an Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Grant. He said they also have a number of federal grants. He said that they support kids with a Utah Children's Recreation Education Grant. He said that within all of that, there are big gaps. He said that they don't support planning, they are not supporting search and rescue enough. He said that when he started creating this program the biggest thing he wanted to do was fill those gaps in their support. He said all of this came about from the 2023 Legislature general session. He said that Representative Jeff Stenquist passed it, and it's called the Outdoor Recreation Initiative. He said that it is funded through the Outdoor Adventure Infrastructure Restricted Account, which he said he believes was Representative Snyder who put that together. He said that there is a 1% levy on existing sales and use tax, so it is collecting a lot of money. He said that some of that money's going to UDOT, some of it is going to State Parks, and then some of it is coming to the Division of Outdoor Recreation, either through our grants or through this, and through the Outdoor Adventure Commission. He gave a quick shout out to Commissioner Taylor, a member of the Outdoor Adventure Commission. He said that they approved projects this year in the amount of \$19 million. He said that right now, they are starting with everybody under contract. He said that will be closer to \$30 million that they are going to have available every single year in the program. He explained that the main thing he wanted to discuss is their Regional Recreation Council. He said so far he had only been talking projects, but he doesn't see this as only a project-focused program. He said he sees this as a people-focused program. He talked about the regions he has divided the

state into. After discussing a few more things about the recreation councils he finished his PowerPoint presentation. The Chair thanked him for his presentation.

#### **X. Congressional Staff Updates.**

**Ms. Tawni Downing** with Congresswoman Celeste Malloy's office said she has been in Richfield staffing their new Richfield office, which they will be having open every Wednesday. They just did an open house a few weeks ago. She said that a couple of weeks ago, they also opened the Delta office, and it's going to be open on the 1st and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, so they are really excited about that. She turned the time over to **Ms. Cindy Bulloch**, who was participating via ZOOM video, who provided a couple brief updates from Congressional Malloy's office. She said that the Congress did pass appropriations so those who have projects, they were all approved. She said that there were a couple that got approved at a little bit lesser amount. She said that Representative Malloy passed her first bill, which is really exciting as a new member of Congress to get your first bill passed. She said that it was a women in small business bill that just makes sure that people don't abuse the system, because they have heard of stories of businesses that would put a woman's name out in front, but it may not necessarily really be a woman-owned business and it isn't always a small business. She said they just put some guidelines in there to make sure that those funds are actually going to small businesses that are truly owned by a woman. She said that the Congresswoman also does a lot of things that are not necessarily legislative, but the representative met with FEMA in her Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting and kind of took them a little bit to the carpet about the flood maps and how dated they are. She said that flood maps haven't been updated or areas aren't mapped at all. She said that the Congresswoman said that there are huge areas that haven't been mapped at all, so they got some concessions, or some promises, from FEMA that they will look a little bit more in our area and get those flood maps updated. Ms. Downing said a concern she brought up was the that just adjacent to the floodplains, they have increased the insurance rates significantly for those houses that aren't in the floodplain, but are adjacent to it. She said that they are going to be following up with one of the FEMA staffers to understand why those rates have increased significantly for people who aren't in the floodplain. Ms. Bulloch said that with all the focus that we are all having on affordable housing, that the amount that they have to pay for a flood insurance is what may make the difference between people actually being able to get into a home or not. She said that they are following up with that. Commissioner Cozzens mentioned an example of what she is talking about. He said that when he was on the Cedar City Council the DNR built their new building on Main Street, and it was in the mapped floodplain, but it wasn't really in jeopardy anymore because the Upper Coal Creek project was done. But the out-of-date maps still showed there was jeopardy, and they were literally going to make them fill the basement with sand so nobody could occupy it. He said that literally, the government was going to make them put sand, fill the whole basement with sand so nobody could use it. He said that this is an example of the kind of craziness Ms. Bulloch is talking about. Ms. Bulloch said that they will kind of keep an eye on that and update the Steering Committee again. Ms. Bulloch stated that Garkane Power called that morning, and said that they had a power pole that was about to fall into the river, so they have to deal with the park, and the Department of the Interior to allow someone to get in and normally it's like a six month process and even on an emergency they said 48 hours is the

fastest they can get in there. She said that in the meantime, this pole is going to fall in and all of Hanksville is going to be without power. She said that sometimes, occasionally, government actually works, and they were able to get an emergency permit and they were, as she spoke, shoring that pole up so that Hanksville will continue to have electricity. She said that it is crazy how close that was to having been disastrous, but occasionally they actually can get things done in an emergency, and help things out.

Ms. Bulloch turned the update back to Ms. Downing. She said that Congresswoman Malloy that week reintroduced the Daylight Act, which would allow states to choose whether they wanted to stay on daylight savings time full-time. She mentioned that those in attendance may remember Utah passed a law not very long ago that said if the federal government ever changed it, then Utah would change it as well. She said that she thought there was 26 other states that have passed it. She said that the Congresswoman voted for Secretary Mayorkas' impeachment because of the border crisis, and she joined her colleagues on a joint resolution to overturn the Federal Highway Administration's rule on greenhouse gas emissions because they felt like it exceeded the authority that Congress had delegated. Ms. Downing said the Congresswoman has joined the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus to add to her other things, to help keep access to hunting, fishing, trapping, and other recreational uses on federal lands. She said that one other thing that she wanted to put on everyone's radar, was that on March 27<sup>th</sup>, in St. George, they are going to be holding a passport fair, and they will be sending information out to everyone. She said that there will be 150 spots. She said that they will have the Western Passport Agency folks coming in, and they will be processing the paperwork for helping people to get their passports. She said that they still must send them in, but this way they have somebody right in front of them that understands the passport system and can help them fill out the passports and get them sent in right then. She said that up north it was successful. She said that they did five days up north and they weren't going to come south but she said they told them that there really needs to be at least one, so they tried to get one somewhere up here like Cedar City or another place. She concluded by stating that they were only willing to do one more, so they are doing one in St. George on March 27<sup>th</sup>, and it will be at Utah Tech University and it will be from 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Commissioner Taylor stated that Congresswoman Malloy has only been her position since November, but said she has just, in his opinion only, been knocking it out of the park for everyone in this district and said he commends her for all that she does. He said that he is totally impressed and asked staff to tell her thanks. Mayor Green echoed that and said he appreciated the help that they got from the Congresswoman and the others on our problem with Forest Service down there to get a darn road put through. He said that she is amazing.

**Mr. Kyle Wilson**, with Senator Romney's office, said that just as Ms. Downing and Ms. Bulloch had said, the appropriation bills were passed last week, half of them at least. Mr. Wilson gave a short summary of some of the highlights. He said there were cuts to EPA, FBI, and ATF, which they are thrilled about. He said that there was an increase in funding to the USDA and the Veterans Administration, and an earmark for wildfire specifically. He said that their Watershed Protection and Forest Recovery Act is still progressing and he said he may have mentioned it before, but it allows them to address flood control

problems way up in the drainage on federal ground before they become an issue that requires an emergency watershed protection project in town. He said they had a bill that he had likewise mentioned a while back about like the 23andMe services, genetic testing, and how some of those labs that are linked to the Chinese Communist Party. And naturally those foreign-owned companies are generous with that data and so this bill was advanced by the committee the day before and would curtail China's ability to get access to that information. He said that the Senator is co-sponsoring a CRA for the Department of Labor's independent contractors' rule that was recently implemented. He said if people are not familiar with that, he thinks the angle frankly is to take away folks ability to be independent contractors (1099 employees) and make them into W-2 employees, because, he frankly said that he thinks unionization is their primary motive there. He said that that's a CRA that they are co-sponsoring to push back on. He said lastly, the Wildfire Committee that was stood up in the infrastructure law has been functioning for about a year and tomorrow Senator Romney will be the ranking member overseeing that committee in a role which is kind of cool because he helped it come to be, and a lot of good things have already come out of it. He said that will be identifying priorities for wildfire, so he said they are excited about that. He said that he is grateful it exists, and he thinks it will do a lot of good in the western United States, who have to deal with wildfire on a daily basis. He said that it is good to be there at Steering Committee and said if there is anything he can do for anyone to please let him know.

**Mr. Gary Webster**, representing Senator Mike Lee's office, spoke next. He said that echoing the thoughts regarding the passport fair, the entire delegation is sponsoring that, and said they will all be working there to assist with that situation. He said that he is looking forward to that. He said that he knows that this has been brought up, and he knows that the commissioners, and he, have talked a little bit about this, but Senator Lee has co-sponsored legislation regarding natural asset companies. He said that if one is familiar with that situation, that they will prohibit companies from raising funds through the Security and Exchange Commission vehicles, such as Wall Street, joining with Senators Barrasso and others, particularly in the western region. He said that bill is an uphill battle. He said it will be a battle, but there is now much more awareness. He reminded how important it is if the Republicans were to take the Senate majority. He said that Senator Lee is in a great position to be the Chair of Energy and Natural Resources, which would be wonderful for Utah. He said that, in addition to that, their office has significant concerns with some of these public lands issues. He said that one, particularly, is the RMPs. He said that they believe that some of these federal agencies are, in fact, not in line with the law. He said that they encourage their state partners to take that in proper order and address that. He said that they have had some issues on Black Canyon and the San Rafael flood. He said he was going to read something that Senator Lee put out that deals with Bears Ears, but prior to reading it, said that it is a broader issue, particularly with some of the things going on that we are seeing with these federal agencies. He then read from Senator Lee's letter (quote) *"Following the release of the Biden administration's resource management plan for Bears Ears National Monument, it is disappointing to witness a continued pattern of disregard for the voices and wishes of Utah and its people, despite our efforts to engage in meaningful, cooperative dialogue for managing our public lands. The administration has once again blatantly ignored Utah's proposals for a balanced approach that honors both conservation and traditional land uses. The decision to push*

*forward with a plan severely limiting access, activities, recreational pursuits, and grazing demonstrates the administration's stark disconnect from the on-the-ground realities. Utah stands ready to challenge this overreach and demands a plan that respects our state's needs."* (unquote). Mr. Webster said that letter kind of encapsulates everything from a public lands perspective from Senator Lee's office, and some of the people that Mr. Webster is working with on the ground. Mr. Webster said a couple of other concerns that the Senator has most recently are, obviously, border policy, voter policy, and aggression towards the Supreme Court. He said that the Senator is as close to that situation as anybody has ever been with his father's record arguing the most cases in the Supreme Court. He said that the Senator is very familiar with that, and very frustrated over that. He said that was all he had for now.

Commissioner Taylor said that he just wanted to thank Senator Lee. He said that they were back, in D.C., a couple of weeks ago. He said they took some ranchers back to talk about grazing. He said that their group met with Mr. Tracy Stone-Manning, Director of the BLM, and then they had a chance to sit down with Senator Lee. He said that they really appreciated meeting with the Senator. He said that he spent quite a bit of time with their group discussing public lands and whatnot. He said that he just really appreciated the Senator taking the time to sit down to meet with them and to discuss the important issues that they took back to D.C.

The Chair stated that as far as the Northern Corridor goes, and also the Zone 6 area, the BLM are purposefully not publishing how many tortoises there are in those areas because their numbers are vastly lower to try to prove their point that they need more time to recover. He said that in reality, the County has already done this. He said that surface counts through not only infrared, but also hand counts through all sorts of things you can do. He said that the ones that are out and that have a heat imprint are still twice the numbers that they were thinking they have, that they want to save. He said that they are still battling the BLM. He also said that as was said earlier by Mr. Zabriskie, entities need more than three days from SITLA to review something. He also said that they have had major federal decisions affecting Washington County where they have given the County only a couple of weeks to review their decisions, or at least what they're going to present to the judge, so they have no time to adequately respond.

#### **XI. State Agency Updates.**

There was no one in attendance to provide an update on any state agencies.

#### **XII. Universities and Technical Colleges Updates.**

Becki Bronson, a non-voting member of the Steering Committee, gave an update on Southern Utah University (SUU). She said that this was her first time attending for SUU, so she introduced herself to those who don't know her. She said that to those who do know her, her role has changed. She said that she used to attend Steering Committee meetings when she served on the school board and back then worked for Red Mountain Health. She said that she decided to shift gears in her career, and said she is now Assistant Vice President of Community and Government Relations at SUU. She said that she took Ms. Donna Law's position. She said that Ms. Law was appointed by the governor to be

over cultural and community engagement for the state. She said that it was a very fast appointment for Ms. Law, so it was a very fast hire for her as well and she is still learning. She said that she has never actually been through an entire legislative session, and so she said she spent the last seven weeks advocating for SUU at the legislature, and that was a first. She said that she has learned a lot. She said that one of the takeaways that she was grateful for was the fact that SUU is highly regarded by the legislature. She said that even though it was a tough legislative year, and anybody that's followed all that has gone on there will know it was a tough budget year. She said that higher education was in a lot of the bills. She said that SUU is widely respected and there is a lot of reasons for that. She said that it was just really neat to see that kind of support from all over the state. She said that even though it was a tough budget year, they called it a socks and underwear Christmas. She said that anybody who's had a socks and underwear Christmas knows what exactly that meant, and it certainly was. But, she said, SUU still came out well. She said that this region has great representation at the Utah legislature, and that is extremely helpful. She said that it was Founders Week that week. She said that Founders Week celebrates the anniversary of SUU being built, and there's a really cool story connected to how it was built, and if someone hasn't seen it, she said that there is a video that SUU produced, called "Back Up the Mountain", if you get an opportunity to see that. She said that it is a terrific representation of what actually happened to get what is now SUU built. It details the sacrifices made by people to create that school. She said that it is really inspiring. She said that since she was new to this, wondered if anyone had any questions for her, or if there was anything anyone would like to know?

Mr. Zabriskie said that one thing that happens in the fall after the universities and colleges have got the students back in place, and they know how many students are enrolled, she can report that. He said that this is usually in the fall that's when either of the two universities report they have had this increase in how many students are now attending, compared to last year. He told her she may want some kind of little graph, or something like that so she can maybe provide. He also told her that if the University has any of those little information magazines, she can bring those and hand those out, when they get published, to the next available Steering Committee meeting. He said that those are always popular to hand out there. He reiterated that Ms. Bronson is a member of the Steering Committee, as a non-voting member, per the Bylaws. He said that both universities have a representative. He said that the bylaws originally called them out as what used to be as colleges, but specify the Steering Committee membership, non-voting, as to being both school's presidents, or their designees. He said that Ms. Bronson is as such a designee. Mr. Zabriskie said that both of our universities have large student populations, he said that SUU actually has more students in attendance at the university, that live on campus and within that area, than the total combined population of three of our five counties. Mr. Zabriskie said that back in the early 1970s that is likely why they brought the school districts into the newly formed AOG's governing board, as well as the colleges (now universities) on there. He believes it is because of who they represent. He said that Ms. Bronson is representing those students and the faculty that are there. He said that it was way back in 1972, when the Five County AOG was established, that they decided that those two members would not be voting members from the colleges (now universities) because they're not elected officials. He said that he thinks that next month the interim president for Utah Tech University is going to come and attend here. He said

that the designated reps are always welcome to have their respective presidents come here to the meeting.

Mr. Zabriskie expressed the regrets of Henrie Walton, who was not able to be there for the meeting. He said that Mr. Walton plans on being at the next Steering Committee meeting in person.

### **XIII. Local Affairs Discussions**

Mr. Zabriskie said that each month we invite the presidents of our two trade schools, Southwest Tech and DixieTech to attend to make any kind of presentation the same way as the other two Universities do. He said that, so far, we haven't been fortunate yet to get them to participate. He said that we will keep encouraging them because they're another resource in our area here.

Mr. Zabriskie said that Mayor Billings isn't here. He said that she gave her regrets that she would be in Hawaii at this time. He said, going back to what Ms. Bronson's report where she had mentioned something about Christmas and something about getting the socks and the pajamas, or whatever, for Christmas he said that he remembered back as a child when your mother would tell you on Christmas eve that you can open up just one present, but it's got to be grandma's, and it was always the pajamas. Mr. Zabriskie said that he had sent Mayor Billings a reply email, but had not received a response. He said he told her it is like when you bring candy to eat during a meeting, like this group, you had better make sure you bring enough for everyone. Mr. Zabriskie said that he told the Mayor in his e-mail to her that if you're going to skip the Steering Committee by going to Hawaii, you need to bring us all along to Hawaii as well, but she had not responded to that. He said that is why we are here in Cedar City when we could have possibly had this meeting in Hawaii.

Mr. Zabriskie gave a short update on the AOG office remodel/building project. He said that they were almost 90 percent done inside the building and that the contractor was finishing the last carpeted areas. He said that it is a mess to take carpet up when you have built-in furniture, but we had a great pair of companies down there in St. George, who, by the way, recently did the Health Department Building in St. George. He said that they were the same carpet layers that did the public health building, as well as the same furniture movers there, so they had a long experience of doing that together and they've done a great job with us. Mr. Zabriskie said that right now they are going to start framing, probably in the next week, on the new climate-controlled storage building. He said that they have got the footings in. He said they have worked on the outside drainage issues with the big concrete drainpipes going in so it's moving along. He said that they should be done in the next couple of months. He said that it is exciting because we have now got a public restroom right in the lobby where it was sorely needed, and secure doors down the hallways. He said that the project is coming along really nicely.



#### **XIV. Adjourn.**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending, and seeing that there was no further business, the Chair called the meeting adjourned.

These minutes were transcribed, typed and edited by Mr. Gary Zabriskie, Deputy Director at the Five County Association of Governments.

The minutes were approved by the Steering Committee at their April 24, 2024 meeting.