

Jordan River Commission Governing Board Meeting

December 5, 2024 | 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Location

Education Center at Conservation Garden Park
Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District
8275 South 1300 West, West Jordan, UT 84088

And remotely via Zoom

Meeting Attendees

Governing Board Members

Councilmember Sylvia Catten, Chair, Millcreek City
Betty Naylor, Gardner Heritage Farms
Councilmember Bryn Johnson, Draper City
Councilmember Marci Houseman, Sandy City
John Mackey, Division of Water Quality
Mayor Dirk Burton, West Jordan
Councilmember Don Shelton, South Jordan City
Shazelle Terry, Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District
Heidi Hoven, National Audubon Society
Eric McCulley, Utah Reclamation, Mitigation, & Conservation Committee
Councilmember Clarissa Williams, South Salt Lake City
Mayor Dirk Burton, West Jordan City
Joel Thompson, South Valley Sewer District
Laura Briefer, Salt Lake City Public Utilities
Suzy Lee, Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands
Luke Peterson, Utah Lake Authority
Councilmember Suzanne Harrison, Salt Lake County

Commission Staff

Soren Simonsen, Executive Director
Rachel Turk, Communications & Outreach Manager
Julie Williams, Events & Volunteer Manager
Ren Griffeth, Administrative, Grant & research Specialist

Visitors and Guests

Wayne Neiderhouser, State Homeless Coordinator
Bruce Holyoak, Murray City
Kelsey Berg, Larry H. Miller Company
Gillian Chapman, Jordan River Commission Intern
Caroline Johnston, Jordan River Commission Intern
Addy Valdez, Utah Lake Authority

Sandy Wingert, Division of Water Quality
Laura Haskell, Division of Water Resources
Cory Fralick, West Jordan City
Steve Van Maren, Draper City Resident
Colby Hill, South Jordan City
Jon Glenn, Event Advisory Committee Chair
Marian Rice, Technical Advisory Committee Chair, University of Utah
Alexander Johnson, Office of Congressman Burgess Owens
Todd Taylor, Draper City
Todd Stonely, Division of Water Resources
Steve Williams, Spy Hop
Isaac Higham, Salt Lake County
Josh Zimmerman, Division of Water Resources
Renn Lambert, LimnoTech
Laura Vernon, Division of Water Resources
Keith Lawrence, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Meeting Minutes

Sylvia Catten, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Identification of Governing Board members and other meeting participants in person and online.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Presentations & Discussion

a) Utah Homelessness Strategic Plan & Utah Homeless Services Board Updates : Wayne Neiderhouser, State Homeless Coordinator in the Governor's Office, provided updates on the Utah Homeless Services Board activity, Utah State Homelessness Strategic Plan and implementation activity. He also discussed the state budget and legislative priorities for the upcoming 2025 Legislative General Session.

He discussed the barriers posed by the rising cost of land, which is now up to 50% of their project costs. Zoning regulations also create difficulties in developing the infrastructure needed. He estimates that 37,500 new affordable housing units are needed per year to catch up with demand, while less than 20,000 will be built this year. Rising housing costs, with the lack of matching wages, has contributed to the 10,000 people who experienced homelessness for the first time in Utah this year. Other states with lower cost of housing have much lower rates of homelessness. Utah currently has 11 per 1,000 residents experiencing homelessness.

Untreated mental health and addiction issues are also factors that impact vulnerable populations. Wayne emphasized that homelessness occurs in every city, but many municipalities do not provide adequate resources. Unregulated camping has high impacts on the high-risk individuals as well as communities. By providing supportive housing and enabling people to be

housed, find employment, and eventually thrive, the impacts are highly reduced. They are looking to develop deeply affordable housing for those who make 30% area median income.

Current shelters will stay open, and they are looking to develop this centralized facility in the near future to give people places to go. They may specialize different centers that target specific groups and centralize the services needed for those groups, but that is undecided.

One 1600 bed facility that provides needed services costs about 35 million per year to operate.

Dirk Burton asked how the Commission could help.

Wayne responded that the Jordan River is an incredible asset that is negatively impacted by drug and camping activity. He asked Commission members to support the creation of affordable housing in their communities and support the efforts of the State Homeless Plan.

Soren Simonsen added that the Commission could serve as a good model of cooperation. He noted that there is not currently a regional council across county and city lines that addresses homelessness. He noted that homelessness is a regional issue that could be better tackled by creating a regional council of some sort across the Wasatch Front. He noted that Envision Utah has been effective at bringing together different groups to effectively work on different issues.

Wayne responded that the State Homeless Board has started to see that this is a regional issue and has reached out to a few local coordinators. He agrees that this needs to be addressed as a region.

Clarissa Williams added that protecting the watersheds is one of the Commission's responsibilities. She asked if the State is following protocols for environmental evaluations as they look at potential shelter sites, as she is concerned about a potential shelter along the Jordan River. This would impact water quality and invasive species issues. She noted that it is within the State's power to determine and manage housing affordability and availability, while municipalities are more limited. She expressed that developers building luxury apartments is also contributing to the overall issue.

Wayne replied that he would love to talk more with Clarissa about her perspectives and challenges outside of the meeting. He noted that much of the information he provided in his presentation is based on data and facts. He also noted that the Oxbow Jail is no longer being seriously considered for a new shelter site, because of the impacts it would have on the Jordan River. He agreed that ultimately policy changes are needed to address the housing issues.

4. Commission Business

a) Committee Updates

Event Advisory Committee Update: Jon Glenn, Chair, reported that the Committee is reviewing meeting minutes awaiting adoption. The Committee is also looking to fill an open position. Mighty Penguin is actively working on fundraising for the Commission. This year they raised 73,000 for the Get to the River Festival, which is a \$12,000 increase from the prior year. This was a highly successful event series. At their most recent meeting they voted to extend the Might Penguin contract.

Technical Advisory Committee Update: Marian Rice, Chair, reported that the Committee has a new Vice Chair, Gina Grandpre, who was confirmed at their most recent meeting. In August they focused on Cooperative Weed Management issues and helped to promote the America the Beautiful Challenge Grant Kick-off event at the Big Bend Nature Park. In October they focused on Community Development. They heard presentations about the Emerald Ribbon Action Plan, Great Salt Lake Heritage Area and Shoreline Preservation Plan, the Jordan River Delta Restoration, and the Power District and Fairpark Area restoration efforts. In November they attended the Salt Lake County Watershed Symposium, which had record attendance this year and included a variety of informative presentations.

b) Appointment of New Ex-Officio Partner Organization: Larry H. Miller Company to join the Governing Board and Watershed Council

Dirk Burton moved to appoint Larry H. Miller Company as an Ex-Officio Partner Organization. John Mackey seconded the motion.

There was no additional discussion on the motion.

The motion was unanimously passed by the Board Members Present.

c) Announcement of Upcoming Governing Board Officer Nominations: Sylvia Catten noted that there is an open Vice Chair position and recommended that Governing Board Members apply. Nominations will be discussed at the February meeting in 2025.

d) [Action Item] Consider Applications & Awards for Jordan River Commission Small Grants
Glendale Neighborhood Council – Art @ The Gardens Event (April 26, 2025)
Wasatch Adaptive Sports – Empowering Utahns through the 2025 Adaptive Biking Program

Soren Simonsen noted that both of these organizations have been funded by the Commission in the past. They have been great partners that have expanded recreational access along the Parkway to different groups. The Commission is recommending both for approval.

Don Shelton moved to approve both Small Grant Applications. Dirk Burton seconded the motion.

There was no additional discussion to the motion.

The motion was unanimously passed by the Board Members present.

e) [Action Item] Adopt Meeting Minutes from past Governing Board meetings

Clarissa Williams moved to adopt all of the past meeting minutes provided. Betty Naylor seconded the motion.

There was no additional discussion to the motion.

The motion was unanimously passed by the Board Members present.

f) [Action Item] Adopt 2025 Governing Board & Watershed Council Meeting Schedule

Soren noted that this is the same general meeting schedule as this year, with meetings occurring on the 1st Thursday of each even numbered month from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. He anticipates that the Watershed Council will be receiving regular updates about the State Water Plan throughout next year, as the Council is an integral part of the process.

John Mackey moved to adopt the proposed 2025 Meeting Schedule. Dirk Burton seconded the motion.

There was no additional discussion to the motion.

The motion was unanimously passed by the Board Members present.

g) Fiscal Year 2025 First Quarter Financial Report: Soren noted that this is a written report that does not require any action. He mentioned that budget amendments would likely be proposed in the future, as insurance quotes have not been received and there were elevated postage costs associated with distributing copies of the Blueprint Jordan River document.

5. Commission Staff Reports

a) Intern Project Updates

Gillian Chapman, Communications Intern, has been working on a mock up of a River & Water Dashboard. Last month, she hosted a focus group to get feedback. It will mainly be targeted to recreational users, but will also include educational information, as well as information about water quality, environmental restoration, water flow, and development.

Caroline Johnston, Event & Volunteer Intern, has been developing signs and informational booklets to distribute at the Jordan River Migratory Bird Refuge. They are meant for visitors and outdoor classroom activities. They provide information about beavers as a keystone species, the Living Site concept and the interconnectedness of species, and the history and goals of restoration in the area.

6. Director's Report

Soren Simonsen reported that the Commission staff is working on the Annual Report. They are awaiting CPA availability to review financial records. The position of Vegetation Coordinator has now been filled by Jens Ammon, who will start in early January. He noted that the meeting packet includes informational handouts about upcoming Events & Activities, Grant & Funding opportunities, Legislative Updates, and News and Media Updates. He noted that there is a federal Great Salt Lake bill that has passed the House and is currently under review in the Senate.

7. Adjourn

John Mackey moved to adjourn the meeting. Don Shelton seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

A meeting recording, presentation and handout materials, and meeting minutes are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pm/sitemap/notice/950025.html>.

Meeting minutes prepared by Ren Griffeth, Jordan River Commission Administrative, Grant & Research Specialist.

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