

Unified Economic Opportunity Commission Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2024 · 10:00AM – 12:00PM · Utah State Capitol, Committee Room 445

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

Commission Members Present:	Governor Spencer Cox, Speaker Mike Schultz, Sen. President J. Stuart Adams, Commissioner Lee Perry, Mayor Dawn Ramsey, Ryan Starks, Casey Cameron, Sydnee Dickson, Joel Ferry, Craig Buttars, Carlos Braceras, Margaret Busse, Jonathan Freedman*, Ben Hart*, Scott Cuthbertson*
Commission Members Excused:	Sophia DiCaro, David Damschen, Geoffrey Landward, Stephen Lisonbee* <p style="text-align: right;">* Non-voting member</p>
Presenters:	Abby Hunsaker, Ryan Starks, Rep. Stephen Whyte, Sen. Lincoln Fillmore, Rep. Karianne Lisonbee, Sen. Luz Escamilla, Vic Hockett, Rich Nye, Levi Pace, Ben Aplanalp, Levi Severson

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

10:05 AM – Approval of Minutes, Gov. Cox

Motion: *“I move to approve the September 16, 2024 meeting minutes of the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission.”*

- Motion: Commissioner Lee Perry
- Second: Joel Ferry
- Motion carried unanimously

10:07 AM – Timeline for UEOC 2024-2025, Abby Hunsaker

Abby Hunsaker laid out the year’s remaining work, including finalized strategic plans and a lookback on the UEOC’s work since 2021.

10:10 AM – Subcommittee Reports

10:10 AM – Commission on Housing Affordability

Sen. Lincoln Fillmore briefly presented the following items:

- Real Property Transfer to Government Entities
- Bonding Process
- Moderate Income Housing Plan - Menu Update
- Modification of the Existing Housing Incentive Zones
- Housing Audit - Overlay Zone and B&C Funding
- Condo Development
- Board Consolidation - Olene Walker and Private Activity Bond

- Property Tax for Affordable Housing-Technical Changes
- Plan Review Processes
- Design and Development Standards
- Statewide Development and Land Use Appeals Process
- OPRO Opinion Timing
- Parking and Garage Requirements
- Private Maintenance of Public Infrastructure
- Public Lands for Housing
- Special Districts
- Noticing

Fillmore explained the five bills containing the work of the CHA:

- Two CHA bills about housing affordability and land use efficiency, one in the House and one in the Senate
- One Land use task force bill
- One chairs' bill that Fillmore and Rep. Stephen Whyte will carry, containing the nonconsensus items the CHA has not approved
- Political Subdivisions Interim Committee bill largely in response to the Legislative Auditor General's audit report

Rep. Stephen Whyte thanked all stakeholders involved, emphasizing the collaboration that has made these policies possible. The underlying goals of each policy include increasing housing supply and promoting homeownership opportunities (while respecting the free market).

Margaret Busse mentioned internal changes to OPRO and said she is thrilled that this is being worked on.

Gov. Cox thanked the chairs for their work.

10:35 AM – Women in the Economy Subcommittee

Sen. Luz Escamilla presented the following policy items:

- Employee Compensation Amendments: Require the state executive branch to compensate employees based on skills rather than previous compensation.
- DoD Employee Transfer: Allow for reciprocity when it comes to licenses of DoD civilian staff brought to Utah. Protect these individuals from negative action so they can practice in the state.
- Child Care Services Amendments: Pilot program that will retrofit empty state-owned buildings into child care facilities.
- Business Tax Credit: Create a tax credit for businesses providing child care to their employees.

Casey Cameron asked whether the first recommendation entails a change to DHRM, and

Escamilla clarified that it does not.

Sydnee Dickson asked whether increasing access to high quality preschool has been part of child care discussions. Escamilla said that conversations have focused on including high quality early childhood education in child care.

Busse commented on the importance of these items. For the last item, access to data will be critical. This item could be a game changer.

10:55 AM – Talent, Education & Industry Alignment Subcommittee

Vic Hockett presented the following recommendations:

- Engineering & Computer Sciences Initiative: \$5M ongoing funding request to increase capacity
- Utah First Credential Expansion
 - PRIME Amendments Policy
 - \$5M one-time & ongoing funding request
- Talent Ready Amendments Policy
- Energy Education Policy
- Juvenile Justice Workforce Development Policy

Hockett expanded on Talent Ready projections, explaining the demand for these funding requests.

Rich Nye explained the proposed amendments to the Utah First Credential program, now called the PRIME Program.

Hockett presented Talent Ready's other policy work, including Energy Education Amendments and Juvenile Justice and Youth Services Amendments.

Levi Pace presented Kem C. Gardner data concerning Utah's Engineering & Computer Science Workforce. The state is well educated in this area, contributing to the state's economic distinctiveness. We excel particularly in certifications.

Ben Aplanalp presented Cicero's work on the Workforce Alignment Study. Industry feedback was found in four areas:

1. Graduates Lack Durable Skills
2. Technical Skill Quality Varies by Industry
3. Industry Desires Greater Collaboration
4. Work-Based Learning is Key to Graduates' Success

Levi Severson detailed recommendations based on these findings:

- Increase presentations, group work, and technical writing opportunities
- Introduce regular face-to-face feedback with professors and advisors

- Design 'starter kits' recommending structures and best practices for industry to expand WBL opportunities
- Create/enhance specialized function dedicated to facilitating relationships between higher ed and industry
- Create an independent credential board staffed by industry professionals to guide credentialing decisions

Speaker Mike Schultz said that this study is aligned with what he has observed. He complimented the state's higher education institutions while pointing out opportunities for these institutions to listen to industry's needs. He emphasized the importance of asking whether we are spending money in the best areas and potentially reallocating funding.

Hockett said that the Custom Fit program is working well; investment here is worthwhile. Talent advisory councils are also effective.

President Stuart Adams asked Hockett what the state can do to address the growing demand for engineers. Hockett said that we need to show students the opportunities for engineering jobs in Utah and get them excited, along with exposing their parents to these opportunities. Adams said we could leverage the state's strengths in concurrent enrollment to achieve this as well.

Carlos Braceras said that his department is struggling to find engineers, but they have found internships to effectively smooth the transition between universities and employers. He also said that being intentional about engineering in high school and preparing early can save students two years in the higher education system. It is too late to decide to become an engineer in college.

Hockett confirmed that they have seen this response in the study. Integrated internships and co-ops are key to making Utah a leader in this area. The First Credential Expansion Program is meant to address this.

Busse commented that one reason for the B+ given to higher education in this study might be the growing sophistication of Utah's economy. Hockett said that funding for programs like the Deep Tech Initiative have allowed the state to stay nimble, but he does see opportunities for improvement.

Dickson said that for years, Utah has been the only state to require career and technical education for graduation. Many states are now trying to play catch up. We need to continue to fund career and technical education, even though the cost here is significantly higher for equipment and programming. Catalyst High School, for example, is a great model for work-based learning. We need more coordination and continued funding.

Gov. Cox said that the current group of university presidents is incredible and has been willing to break some of the "ivory tower" rules of yesteryear that are holding students back.

He agreed with Dickson about Catalyst High School, speaking to the way that it transformed students who had a deficit in some of these skills. He believes that Utah can become a leader in work-based learning.

11:20 AM – Gameplan 2034, GOEO Team

Ryan Starks showed the commission the title page of *Gameplan 2034*. Kori Ann Edwards thanked commissioners for their input. She said the team is looking forward to finalizing it and presenting it and making it public in January.

Motion: *“I move to support the Gameplan 2034 working draft as presented, with the finalized draft to be released in January of 2025.”*

- Motion: Ryan Starks
- Second: Craig Buttars
- Motion carried unanimously

11:30 AM – Targeted Industry Strategic Plans

11:30 AM – Financial Services, Howard Headlee

Howard Headlee informed the commission that Utah is the 5th largest banking state in the country. This status goes back to decades of foundational work. We have the most diverse banking ecosystem. He is proud of the role the industry has played in making Utah a great place to live and start a business. He presented their goals:

1. Maintain Utah’s status as the best place in America to establish and operate a bank
 - a. Keep state laws and tax environment competitive with other banking center states
 - b. Empower UDFI with resources to develop and retain the best examination force in America
2. Stop federal efforts to “shut down” the industrial bank charter
 - a. Establish Utah representation on the Senate Banking Committee and House Financial Services Committee
 - i. Senator-elect Curtis has prioritized Senate Banking
 - ii. Representative-elect Kennedy has prioritized House Financial Services
3. Restore the DeNovo Bank Chartering Process
 - a. Ensure new Chairman of the FDIC and board members will follow current law
 - i. If this process functions as designed, several new banks will be formed in Utah in the next 2 years.
4. Preserve the dual banking system
 - a. Litigate to enforce policies that protect the dual banking system

- b. Oppose state laws that discriminate against state-chartered banks
5. Build a Broad Coalition to Fight Fraud: Utah Fraud Prevention Coalition (UFPC)

Headlee reminded commissioners of the threat that fraud, which is becoming increasingly sophisticated, poses to Utah. Banks are losing ground in their efforts to do this alone. He closed by saying that the pursuit of happiness is impossible without the banking system.

Mayor Dawn Ramsey thanked Headlee for his informative presentation. She asked what the rest of us can do to support our federal delegation in getting the appointments discussed. Headlee said that this is a very sensitive process and will happen largely behind the scenes.

Gov. Cox said that most people have no idea how important this industry is in Utah, or how wildly successful it is. Utah is at the forefront of changes in the industry.

Busse added that fraud is much more sophisticated, and our systems are not built to handle it. This is worth significant investment.

11:40 AM – Software & IT, Clint Betts

The commission watched a video (1:38:00) detailing the efforts of Silicon Slopes to empower entrepreneurs and foster innovation.

11:50 AM – Motion to approve Subcommittee and Strategic Plan Legislative Actions

Motion: *“I move to forward these recommendations to legislative committees for consideration in the 2025 legislative session. I further move to direct UEOC staff to work with the legislature on these topics.”*

- Motion: Pres. Stuart Adams
- Second: Carlos Braceras
- Motion carried unanimously

Gov. Cox reminded everyone that these are simply recommendations, and that as they progress through the legislative process, there are likely changes and improvements ahead.

11:52 AM – Concluding Remarks, Gov. Cox, Speaker Schultz, & Pres. Adams

Speaker Schultz thanked commissioners and staff for their time and efforts, saying that these are some of the best recommendations he has seen as part of the UEOC; he was especially impressed, he said, with the work of the subcommittees. He expressed appreciation for the UEOC bringing the executive and legislative branches together, along with all stakeholders throughout the state.

Pres. Adams echoed the Speaker's remarks, adding that he is proud that Utah is full of people who care; we would not be able to move our economy forward without caring Utahns and leaders. This commission is a good reflection of the team efforts that go into improving quality of life in Utah. Here, we collaborate and we move the needle.

Gov. Cox. recounted an experience he had on the campaign trail just weeks earlier: he was asked why he focuses so much on the economy instead of on the things that Utahns need. He said that everything we want to do depends on having the best economy in the country. Every single priority gets better when we get this right. If we let the economy languish, everyone suffers. He thanked the commission for its work.

12:00 PM – Adjourn