



# **TRUST LANDS**

## **ADMINISTRATION**

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS

### **Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, Aug 21, 2025**

**10:00 a.m.**

102 Tower – 6<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom

102 South 200 East

Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

#### **Board Members**

##### **Present at Anchor Location**

Warren Peterson, Chair

Tiffany James, Co-Vice Chair

Dr. Mike Nelson

Dan Simons

John Baza

Bryan Harris, Co-Vice Chair

Mike Mower

#### **Attending Staff & Public**

Michelle McConkie, Executive Director

Brian Tarbet, New Board of Trustees Member

Andy Bedingfield, Assistant Director for Energy and Minerals

Mike Johnson, Chief Legal Counsel

Imaan Ahmed, Exec. Assistant to Exec. Director and Board

Stephanie Barber-Renteria, Managing Director for Energy and Minerals

Matt Thomspson, AG

Keli Beard, Legal Counsel

Marla Kennedy, Director of Communications & Governmental Affairs

Joelette Organista, Communications Specialist

Chris Fausett, Managing Director of Surface Resources

Marcos Santana, IT Support

Vince Wayodi, IT Support

Kyle Pasley, Managing Director for Planning and Development

### Attending Staff & Public (continued)

Eric Baim, Project Analyst for Planning and Development  
Kim Christy, Land Trusts Protection & Advocacy Office (LTPAO)  
Liz Mumford, Land Trusts Protection & Advocacy Office (LTPAO)  
Jessie Stewart, Land Trusts Protection & Advocacy Office (LTPAO)  
Stanford Graham, RASA Energy  
Justin Robb, CKC Operations  
Jon Lear, Lear & Lear  
Lionel Trepanier (online)  
Dave Donegan, previous Board Chair  
Paula Plant, Utah State Board of Education (USBEL)  
Margaret Bird, ASTL  
Sheri Mettle, Utah PTA

### Welcome

At 10:09 a.m., Chair Peterson welcomed the Board, staff, and visitors, and opened the meeting.

### Minutes

Mr. Simons moved to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2025 Board Meeting, with a correction to his name. Chair Peterson accepted the motion, and Mr. Baza seconded it. The vote was unanimously in favor, with Co-Vice Chair James excused.

| Yea   | Nay | Excused             |
|---|-----|---------------------|
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> |     |                     |
| Chair Peterson  |     | Co-Vice Chair James |
| Co-Vice Chair Harris  |     |                     |
| Mr. Simons  |     |                     |
| Mr. Baza  |     |                     |
| Dr. Nelson  |     |                     |
| Mr. Mower   |     |                     |

### Confirmation of Upcoming Meeting Dates

September 18, 2025 – Regular Meeting, Mr. Mower unable to attend, Mr. Baza will join virtually  
October 23, 2025 - Regular Meeting  
November 20, 2025 - Regular Meeting

### **Trust Land Funds in Action**

Ms. Kennedy announced the start of the school week, noting that the principal's attendance was not requested.

### **Social Media Minute**

Ms. Kennedy and Ms. Organista presented the "Trust Lands Funds in Action" initiative. Ms. Organista introduced "The Bene Bunch," a new series of social media campaign designed to educate the public about the beneficiaries ("Bene") of the Trust Lands Administration. The campaign features a costumed individual representing various beneficiaries, such as public school teachers and coal miners, and aims to answer fundamental questions like "Who gets the money?". The campaign has already shown success, with public comments now defending the trust against the misconception that it manages public land. Despite this, significant public education is still needed, as 80% of comments on a previous post urged the Trust Lands Administration to cease selling public lands.

Mr. Mower inquired about the possibility of boosting numbers through a paid campaign. Ms. Kennedy confirmed that a small portion of the current campaign is paid and that complementary ads are also being utilized. She will provide a comprehensive report on the campaign's performance in September, following its conclusion.

Another video highlighted a collaboration between the Trust Lands Administration, the State Office of Historical Preservation (SHPO), and the Utah Cultural Site Stewardship Program (UCSS). This partnership enables the Trust Lands Administration to utilize volunteer efforts for monitoring and protecting cultural sites on its lands, as the agency lacks the necessary staff to do so independently.

### **Public Comments**

The meeting included a 15-minute public comment session. Mr. Stanford Graham, representing RASA Energy, announced that his company is now in continuous production, extracting pure hydrocarbons from Utah's tar sands, a process that was previously unsuccessful. He stated that their process is water-free and that the resulting hydrocarbons are without contaminants and without toxins. Production is running 21-30% of mass concentration of hydrocarbons by weight by unit of tar sands.

Mr. Baza asked at what temperature they get the hydrocarbons. Mr. Graham indicated it is at room temperature and explained briefly how the process works.

Mr. Lionel Tripanier from Utah Tar Sands Resistance who joined virtually, spoke in opposition to the tar sands leases. He claimed that some information in the board's memorandum (14 d) was false and misleading, specifically regarding the use of a water-heavy steam injection method by a previous company, U.S. Oil Sands. He also disputed the claim that Utah has some of the largest tar sands deposits in the world, citing Canada as having a far greater amount. He expressed concern that the new leases would not cover the administrative costs for the Trust Lands Administration.

Mr. Justin Robb of CKC Operations also spoke, confirming that his company has an agreement with RASA Energy to use their extracted material. He noted that his company had recently paved a road in Vernal with the material and that it had performed well, exceeding UDOT specifications.

### **Chair's Farewell**

Chair Warren Peterson delivered his farewell address, celebrating his successor and other board members. He highlighted the organization's success since its formation in 1994, noting that the trust fund has grown from \$50 million to over \$3.7 billion and has distributed approximately \$2 billion to beneficiaries. He also acknowledged the recent debate over the Advocacy Office but urged the board to move forward with collaboration.

### **Recognition of Chair**

Executive Director Michelle McConkie and other board members offered tributes to Chair Peterson's service, recognizing his wisdom, professionalism, and dedication as an outstanding leader and mentor.

### **Swearing In of the New Board Member Brian Tarbet and New Leadership**

Brian Tarbet was sworn in as a new board member by Chair Peterson.

A motion was made by Co-Vice Chair Harris to nominate Ms. Tiffany James as the new Board Chair, Mr. Mower seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Chair James then suggested continuing Mr. Peterson's tradition of having two Co-Vice Chairs. Mr. Baza made a motion to nominate Mr. Bryan Harris and Dr. Mike Nelson as Co-Vice Chairs, Mr. Simons seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

### **Comments from New Board Leadership**

Chair James praised legislative leaders and advocates for creating the board's composition rules.

Described as a "blue ribbon panel" of community leaders and subject matter experts, the board guides the agency and supplements staff expertise. The speaker expressed honor in serving on the board, thanking Warren for six years of service and his expertise in water rights, land, and minerals. Dave Donegan was also thanked for his unmatched expertise in oil and gas exploration and production.

### **Director's Report**

Executive Director Michelle McConkie announced that several TLA staff members and Mr. Simons attended the NASTL conference in July in Denver, CO. The final revenue for fiscal year 2025 is slightly over \$142 million, marking one of the top 2 or 3 years for the organization. She also introduced two new hires: Imaan Ahmed, Assistant to the Director and Board, and Joe Barker, a returning employee in the IT department.

Mr. Beddingfield, from Energy & Minerals, presented a notification item about a minor amendment to the Fossil Rock coal mine lease (newly opened coal mine), which added 20 acres to the lease for a

bleeder panel. He also reported on the June mineral auction results, stating that the auction brought in over \$1.1 million. The highest bid was \$823 per acre for a 243-acre parcel.

### **Advocate Report**

Mr. Kim Christy, Director of the Land Trusts Protection & Advocacy Office, had Ms. Jesse Stewart and Ms. Liz Mumford provide an update. The SITFO Board of Trustees recently appointed Rocky Patel as a new member and Angelique Pappas as the new Deputy CIO.

They reported on various advocacy and outreach efforts, including participating in conferences and collaborating on a video for principal training on Trust Lands. They announced a media event on September 2nd to celebrate the \$111 million in land trust distributions to schools this year, which will highlight the impact the funds have on classrooms.

They also provided updates on other beneficiaries, noting that the Schools for the Deaf and Blind are now under the oversight of the Utah State Board of Education. They mentioned that seven non-active mining certificate programs were cut at the University of Utah but that they are working closely with the dean to ensure career pathways remain open for students.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Action Item 14a.**

Petition for Appeal and Adjudicative Proceedings, re: Wesco Operating, Inc., by Michael Johnson, Chief Legal Counsel for Board of Trustees.

A meeting was held to mediate a dispute, successfully leading to an agreement in principle between the parties. The agreement is not yet final, with a 90-day timeframe given for the parties to finalize the details and potentially withdraw the matter through a settlement.

This is seen as good news, resolving the issue before it escalates to the board.

### **Action Item 14b.**

Proposed Major Development in Leeds, Washington County, Utah (115.52 +/- acres) with Brennan Holdings by Aaron Langston, Assistant Managing Director (Washington) of Real Estate Development.

A 115.52-acre Leeds parcel with a 20-year history has undergone multiple iterations due to market and environmental changes. Significant efforts, including collaboration with DEQ and the use of hand tools at the site, have protected cultural sites like the Silver Reef Museum and the Christy Mill. Leeds and Washington County Commissioners also prioritize site protection. The plan includes 45 lots with defined housing footprints, developed in three phases. Leeds Domestic Waterusers Association will provide water, with will-serve letters secured for all lots. Brennan Holdings was selected after advertising from February to May, due to their 45% sales price offer, adequate funding, ability to navigate regulatory environments, and strong track record.

Co-Vice Chair Harris made a motion to authorize negotiations with Brennan Holdings with the expectation of a second Board presentation after negotiations have been finalized. Dr. Nelson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

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## Co-Vice Chair Harris

Mr. Simons

Co-Vice Chair Dr. Nelson

Mr. Tarbet

Proposed Amendment to include additional prospective acreage in a Clay and Metalliferous Minerals Lease OBA (ML-54409) with Ionic Fox LLC, Utah County (3,700.54 +/- acres) by Andy Bedingfield, Assistant Managing Director (SLC) of Energy & Minerals.

Co-Vice Chair Dr. Nelson made a motion to approve the proposed amendment as it was presented, with a second from Mr. Baza. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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## Co-Vice Chair Harris

Mr. Simons

Co-Vice Chair Dr. Nelson

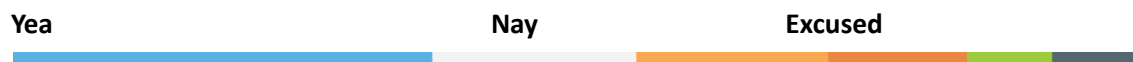
Mr. Tarbet

Proposed Amendment and Extension to OBA (ML-49927) with 2020 Resources LLC, Uintah and Grand Counties (4,319.86 +/- acres) by Chanse Rinderknecht, Geoscientist/Lease Manager (Vernal) of Energy and Minerals.

works on asphalt shingles to extract bitumen. This process is expected to be more economic and is nearly operational.

The key terms of the amended lease include extending it to match an adjacent lease expiring in 2030, upfront payment of rentals and minimum royalty, an increased royalty rate of 10%, and an upfront bonus payment. A crucial aspect is the "produce-to-earn" clause which prohibits any new disturbance until exposed hydrocarbon has been produced. This clause aims to protect the TLA's interests and ensure focus on existing disturbed areas.

During the discussion, Chanse Rinderknecht also addressed public comments, clarifying that the previous U.S. Oil Sands process did involve water injection and steam, and reiterating his belief in the significant resource potential of Utah's tar sands. He distinguished 2020 Resources' solvent-based approach from another company's "polar selected agent." The TLA acknowledges the potential value of the resource and the importance of monitoring the company's activities and results. Dr. Nelson, Co-Vice Chair, moved to approve the proposed Amendment and Extension to OBA ML-49927, which Mr. Baza seconded. The motion passed with unanimous approval.



Chair James  
Co-Vice Chair Dr. Nelson  
Co-Vice Chair Mr. Harris  
Mr. Simons  
Mr. Baza  
Mr. Mower  
Mr. Tarbet

#### Action Item 14e.

New Proposed Bituminous Asphaltic Sands Lease OBA (ML-54596) with RASA Energy, Inc., Grand County (50.42 +/- acres) by Chanse Rinderknecht, Geoscientist/Lease Manager (Vernal) of Energy and Minerals. Mr. Rinderknecht commended RASA Energy for their professional approach and willingness to allow observation of their process. RASA Energy is developing a "polar selective agent" and a system involving a conveyor belt to extract hydrocarbons from tar sands. They have successfully produced a barrel of oil from over 1,500 pounds of material and are continually refining their process.

The lease has a bonus payment of \$1.50 per acre, and a minimum royalty of \$500. The production royalty is 8.5% on all produced material, and the lease term is 10 years, which can be extended by production if the royalty exceeds the minimum.

The project's jurisdiction falls under DOGM and RASA Energy is in the process of securing their permits and bonding. The discussion highlights the significance of innovative partners in an area where production has historically been challenging, emphasizing the potential for these new methods to bring a long-unproduced commodity to market.

Mr. Baza made a motion to approve the proposed OBA ML-54596, with a second from Co-Vice Chair Dr. Nelson. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

**Yea**

**Nay**

**Excused**



Chair James  
Co-Vice Chair Harris  
Co-Vice Chair Dr. Nelson  
Mr. Simons  
Mr. Baza  
Mr. Mower  
Mr. Tarbet

## **NOTIFICATION ITEMS**

### **Notification Item 15a.**

Minor Development Transaction: Sale of Lincoln Culinary Pump House Site, 1.3 acres in Tooele County in the Pine Canyon area of Tooele Valley by Eric Baim, Project Manager (SLC) of Real Estate Development. No comments or questions from Board members.

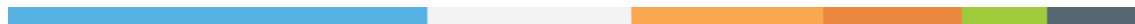
## **ADJOURN**

At 12:24 p.m., Mr. Mower moved to adjourn the meeting. Co-Vice Chair Harris seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

**Yea**

**Nay**

**Excused**



Chair James  
Co-Vice Chair Harris  
Co-Vice Chair Dr. Nelson  
Mr. Simons  
Mr. Baza  
Mr. Mower  
Mr. Tarbet

**Respectfully Submitted,**

Imaan Ahmed

Executive Assistant to the Director and the Board

Audio of this meeting can be found at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/1313725.m4a>