

Draft Minutes

Land Trusts Protection & Advocacy Committee

Tuesday, April 14, 2026, 10 a.m.

Anchor Location: 310 S Main St., Ste. 1275, Salt Lake City, UT 84101

In-Person Participants:

Richard Ellis, Advocacy Committee Chair

Paula Plant, Advocacy Committee Vice Chair

Louie Cononelos, Advocacy Committee

Roger Barrus, Advocacy Committee

Brad Benz, Advocacy Committee

Jessie Stuart, Advocacy Office, Interim Director

Liz Mumford, Advocacy Office, Program Manager

Michelle McConkie, Trust Lands Administration (TLA) Director

Stephanie Barber-Renteria, TLA Deputy Director, Operations

Mike Johnson, TLA Chief Legal Counsel

Chris Fausett, TLA Deputy Director, Energy & Land Resources

Kira Bennett, School Children's Trust (SCT), Compliance Specialist

Sheri Mattle, PTA Trust Lands Specialist

Todd Jensen, Attorney General's Office

Margaret Bird, Advocates for School Trust Lands President; member of the public

Kirt Slaugh, Office of State Treasurer Chief Deputy State Treasurer

Zoom Participants:

Ryan Kulig, School & Institutional Trust Funds Office (SITFO), Finance and Operations Officer

1. Call meeting to order

Meeting called to order by Chair Ellis at approximately 10:00 a.m.

2. Chair's report & Recognition of Kim Christy and Roger Barrus

Chair Ellis highlighted the successful legislative session and the passage of SB 43, then noted the progress being made on the SITLA Board nominating process and the ongoing search for a new director to succeed the Kim Christy who has retired.

The committee took time to honor former director Kim Christy, and Roger Barrus for his service on the Advocacy Committee. Mr. Christy and Mr. Barrus were presented with commemorative gifts in recognition of their service to the Advocacy Office and beneficiaries of the trust. In their parting remarks, both emphasized that the success of the office was a team effort and noted was the strength of the current governance structure of the Trust System and expressed confidence in the trajectory forward.

3. Approval of minutes & Calendar

Mr. Cononelos motioned to approve minutes from January 13, 2025. Mr. Barrus seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative. Upcoming meeting dates for Trust System entities were provided in the packet. The Advocacy Office meetings will be held in the months February, May, August and November moving forward.

4. Trust System reports

Trust Lands Advisory Committee (TLAC) Report

Ms. Plant provided an update on the status of annual school reports and compliance initiatives. Nearly all schools (over 1,000 total) have submitted their final reports for the prior year. Only two schools remain outstanding. The office has successfully reduced the number of schools with excessive funding carryover. Previously, 160 schools carried over more than 10% of their budgets. By implementing a new policy where non-compliant schools must reallocate excess funds to other compliant schools within their district, the number of non-compliant schools has been significantly reduced to just 33.

To further support compliance, the office is putting more emphasis on digital training. Marcus Chen is developing Canvas courses tailored to school administrators that will be available this summer. This digital approach aims to provide proactive training before the school year begins, supplementing ongoing on-site outreach at events like the PTA conference.

Trust Lands Administration (TLA) Report:

Director McConkie provided a financial update and a briefing on key legislative bills from the session. Fiscal year-to-date revenue has reached over \$118 million. Oil and gas royalties saw a significant increase of the past month from \$3.5 million in February to \$9 million in March (largely due to world events). SITLA is on track to meet or exceed the previous year's total revenue of \$142 million.

SB 21 *Geothermal Amendments* addressed the ownership of geothermal resources. While the legislation generally classifies geothermal as part of the surface estate, SITLA successfully secured a clarification that geothermal resources remain part of the mineral estate for trust lands. This provision protects the revenue potential for beneficiaries, particularly in cases of "severed estates" where SITLA owns the mineral rights but not the surface.

HB 64 *School and Institutional Trust Lands Amendments* addressed the preservation of culturally or scientifically significant sites on trust lands. The bill was tabled, and the preservation of Promise Rock will be handled through an administrative process instead. TLA is placing greater emphasis on relationships with countries to find win-win outcomes that allow for collaborative planning while maintaining its fiduciary mandate to the beneficiaries.

SITFO Report

Mr. Kulig updated the committee on staffing, budget, and portfolio performance. He highlighted that SITFO has grown to 17 members (13 full-time and 4 part-time) and summarized recent hires and internal role expansions. Expenses through February remain under the forecasted budget for the fiscal year. This is primarily due to personnel vacancies in the first half of the year.

Investment performance as of Q4 2025:

- **Growth:** The portfolio is currently valued at approximately \$4.5 billion, representing a growth of roughly \$600 million over the last six months.
- **Benchmarks:** Five-year performance remains aligned with the policy benchmark of CPI + 5%. The portfolio showed - strength over the one-year period, outperforming the benchmark by 275 basis points.
- **Asset Performance:** Real assets - outperformed (by over 1,000 basis points), driven by strong commodity prices.
- **Risk & Volatility:** Portfolio risk remains well below the benchmark. Early estimates for Q1 2026 suggest the portfolio held up well during recent market drawdowns, down only 2-3%, which is consistent with its defensive design.
- **Compliance:** All asset allocations and liquidity constraints remain within approved compliance ranges.

Protection & Advocacy Office (Advocacy Office) Report:

Operational and Compliance Updates:

Ms. Stuart provided a quarterly operational and compliance update via the office dashboard, highlighting that all office performance measures are currently being met, and the office is forecasted to remain under budget through fiscal year end. She also briefed the Committee on the third 180-day audit follow-up response, noting that the passage of SB 43 successfully implemented several key recommendations.

Office Rebrand:

With the passage of SB 43, the office name will formally transition to the School & Institutional Trust Beneficiaries' Advocacy Office (Advocacy Office). Discussion by those in attendance emphasized that the office name in the logo and other communication assets should include the possessive apostrophe after "Beneficiaries." This reinforces the office's identity and mission to represent and advance the rights and interests on behalf of the beneficiaries and aligns with statute.

The rebranding effort will also align the Advocacy Office with a statewide visual rebrand directed by the Governor's Office. Although the Advocacy Office is a subdivision of the State Treasurer's Office and not legally mandated to follow executive rebranding, adopting the universal Utah logo strengthens the office's credibility and immediate recognition as a state entity.

Furthermore, the office continues to make progress towards ADA Title II standards, ensuring that digital assets, including a new website and digital assets that are accessible to individuals with visual or auditory disabilities.

SITLA and SITFO Nominating Committee Update:

SITFO and TLA nominating committee processes are moving forward on schedule. The SITFO Board Nominating Committee forwarded nominees to the State Treasurer, Marlo Oaks, for final selection. The TLA Board Nominating Committee will complete their process to select nominees in April and forward selected nominees to Governor Spencer Cox for consideration.

General Legislative Session 2026 Outcomes:

Key bills as summarized in the meeting materials were reviewed with the Advocacy Committee. The Committee engaged in a discussion regarding the Public Education Economic Stabilization Restricted Account. While legislation proposed by Representative Neil Walter to establish permanent guardrails and a dedicated education trust did not pass, it will likely be studied during the interim session.

During the report, member of the public, Ms. Bird, raised concerns regarding the constitutionality of utilizing income tax revenue from this account for non-educational purposes, specifically citing the \$50 million transfer to the Department of Natural Resources for trust land acquisitions. She proposed the necessity of seeking an Attorney General opinion on if a such transfer is constitutional. The Advocacy Office will consider consulting with the AG's office on the matter.

Ms. Mumford also noted that the office will monitor potential impact of carbon credits on future trust revenues and will be an item to monitor during the interim.

Roadmap of SB 43 Implementation:

Ms. Mumford provided a detailed briefing on the implementation of SB 43. To support this transition, the office has developed a comprehensive project roadmap in a working document to track statutory, operational, and administrative tasks through March 2027.

SB 43 also formally transitions the current Committee to a seven-member Council, adding two seats appointed by the Council with the State Treasurer's consent: an at-large member and an institutional beneficiary representative. Mr. Slauch requested clarification on what the Treasurer's "consent" function entails. The Advocacy Office will develop a protocol to coordinate these appointments with the Treasurer. To maintain institutional knowledge and avoid significant turnover in a single year, the office proposed a staggering schedule for the initial Council terms.

Public Building Trust Update:

Ms. Mumford provided historical background on the Public Buildings Trust and discussed potential solutions for its dissolution, given its limited remaining assets. The Public Buildings Trust is not a permanent fund and does not make distributions; it currently holds a balance of approximately \$147,000. The Advocacy Office will continue coordinating with TLA and the Capital Preservation Board to develop a formal request for the Advocacy Council to consider at a future meeting.

Closed Session

Following the conclusion of the general reports, Mr. Connelos moved to enter into closed session pursuant to Utah Code § 52-4-205(1)(e) to discuss the sale of real property in connection with H.B. 262 of the 2024 General Session, and pursuant to Utah Code § 52-4-205(1)(a) to discuss the character and professional competence of individuals being considered for service on the School and Institutional Trust Beneficiaries Advocacy Council and for the Advocacy Director position interviews. Ms. Plant seconded. The vote was unanimous via roll call. The Committee entered closed session at approximately 11:25 am.

Action Item on Advocacy Director Nominees

Upon reconvening in open session, Mr. Connelos moved to submit the names of Liz Mumford and Dillon Hoyt to the State Treasurer for consideration for appointment as the Advocacy Office Director. Mr. Benz seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Adjourn

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Connelos motioned to adjourn, Mr. Benz seconded, the vote was unanimous in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:25.