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3 **MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) CAPACITY**
4 **COMMITTEE MEETING HELD MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2026, AT 2:00 P.M. THE MEETING**
5 **WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR**
6 **LOCATION WAS 10185 EAST HIGHWAY 210, ALTA, UTAH.**
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8 **Committee Members:** Mayor Roger Bourke, Chair
9 Commissioner Emily Gray
10 Mayor Erin Mendenhall
11 Mayor Monica Zoltanski
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13 **Non-Voting Members** Jack Stauss
14 CJ Blye
15 John Adams
16

17 **Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director
18 Sam Kilpack, Director of Operations
19 Will McKay, Director of Communications
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21 **OPENING**
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23 **1. Chair Roger Bourke will open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Capacity Committee**
24 **of the Central Wasatch Commission.**
25

26 Chair Roger Bourke called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Capacity Committee Meeting
27 to order at approximately 2:00 p.m. and welcomed those present. He asked that the meeting start with
28 introductions. Chair Bourke explained that he is the Mayor of Alta, this is his second term, and he is
29 devoted to environmental issues. John Adams is a member of the CWC Stakeholders Council and is
30 also the Chair of the Economy System Committee. He retired from his corporate job in technology
31 sales consulting and has been a ski patroller in Big Cottonwood Canyon for the last 35 years.
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33 Lindsey Nielsen reported that she is the Executive Director of the CWC. She is excited to hear about
34 the Capacity Committee discussions. Will McKay stated that he is the Director of Communications
35 for the CWC. Sam Kilpack explained that she is the Director of Operations for the CWC. Mayor
36 Monica Zoltanski is the Mayor of Sandy City and is in her fifth year of service as a CWC
37 Commissioner.
38

39 CJ Blye is an Assistant Professor at the University of Utah in the Department of Parks, Recreation,
40 and Tourism. Her research area and specialty is visitor use management. Jack Stauss stated that he
41 is the Executive Director of Save Our Canyons. Commissioner Emily Gray reported that she is on

1 the Holladay City Council and often recreates in the canyons. Mayor Erin Mendenhall explained that
2 she is the Mayor of Salt Lake City. Chair Bourke thanked those present for introducing themselves.

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4 **PRIORITY IDENTIFICATION DISCUSSION**

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6 **1. Commissioners will Discuss and Set the Vision and Purpose for the Committee.**

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8 **a. What is Capacity as it Applies to this Region?**

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10 **b. What are the Committee’s Goals in Defining Capacity?**

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12 **2. Commissioners will Discuss and Set Goals in Support of the Broader Vision.**

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14 **3. Commissioners will Determine Specific Objectives to Help Achieve the Committee’s**
15 **Goals and Vision.**

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17 Ms. Nielsen shared the Capacity Committee presentation slides that were prepared ahead of the
18 meeting. She noted that there is a memo included in the Meeting Materials Packet. It provides
19 background information about how capacity is thought of in technical research and how it is generally
20 used in management protocols and frameworks for the land, water, and road managers in the Central
21 Wasatch and beyond. There have been a number of studies performed in the Central Wasatch:

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23
- Central Wasatch Specific Resources:
 - CWC Stakeholders Capacity Committee (2019-2020);
 - CWC Visitor Use Study (Updated 2024);
 - CWC Central Wasatch Dashboard;
 - USU Central Wasatch Visitor Use Study (2014-2015).
 - General Capacity Resources:
 - USDA Carrying Capacity: Maintaining Outdoor Recreation Quality (1971);
 - Interagency Visitor Use Management Council: Visitor Capacity Guidebook (2019).
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32 Ms. Nielsen reported that there are also Alternative Management Frameworks:

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- 2003 Uinta Wasatch Cache National Forest Management Plan – U.S. Forest Service;
 - 2026 Tri-Canyon Trails Plan – U.S. Forest Service and Salt Lake County;
 - 2023 Canyons Management Program – Salt Lake County Office of Regional Development;
 - 1999 Salt Lake City Watershed Management Plan – Salt Lake Public Utilities.
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39 One of the first Stakeholders Council subcommittees was the Capacity Committee. At that time, the
40 membership included Drs. Kelly Bricker and Kirk Nichols, who were researchers at the University
41 of Utah at the time. There were also interested Council Members serving on that subcommittee. As
42 a result of the work done by the original Capacity Committee, there was eventually a contract with
43 Utah State University to collect data through the Visitor Use Study. Ms. Nielsen reminded those
44 present that the Visitor Use Study was released in 2023 and was updated in 2024 with new data.

45
46 The Mountain Accord charter from 2015 called for the development of an Adaptive Management
47 Plan for the Central Wasatch, utilizing the conditions and thresholds contained within the Central
48 Wasatch Dashboard. The original idea was for the Central Wasatch Dashboard to be a report card

1 with set thresholds and indicators of ideal conditions. What currently exists is a collection of
2 environmental and human data that is accessible to the public. The dashboard does not have ideal
3 conditions set or communicated for any of the elements. It also does not set capacity thresholds.
4

5 Ms. Nielsen explained that one reason the Central Wasatch Dashboard does not have set thresholds
6 has to do with the difficulty of doing so. She pointed out that the CWC is not the water, land, or road
7 authority. Several Committee discussion prompt questions were reviewed:
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- 9 • What do we mean by "capacity" in the Central Wasatch?
- 10 • How would we measure it?
- 11 • What values go into its definition?
- 12 • Are there models or analogies to what we are looking for?
- 13 • Why are we interested in determining capacity and what is the urgency?
- 14 • When we're finished, what does the product look like? A number? A formula? A rule?
- 15 • What mechanisms for enforcement exist for our end product?

16
17 Before the discussion, the prompt questions are considered, and there are several tasks outlined for
18 the Capacity Committee. The first is to determine the purpose of the Capacity Committee and the
19 potential study. The second task is to determine the need for the Committee and a more thorough
20 capacity analysis than what was done for the Visitor Use Study. The third task is to consider the
21 thought exercises in the memo related to ideal conditions, indicators, and thresholds. The fourth task
22 is to determine the desired outcome of this endeavor, and task five has to do with the meeting cadence.
23 The updated version of the presentation slides also includes additional discussion prompts.
24

25 In the presentation slides, Chair Bourke noted that the reason there is an interest in capacity has to do
26 with the preservation and sustainability of the natural environment. The number of people in the
27 Central Wasatch is increasing, but the open space is decreasing. Many people are attracted to this
28 region because of the natural environment, but by coming here and enjoying the environment,
29 degradation occurs. Much of the economy in the region is tied to growth and construction, so any
30 measure that limits that will be met with resistance. He acknowledged that it is unlikely there will be
31 a universally accepted measure of capacity, largely because it will adversely impact certain interests.
32 The presentation slides also noted that enforcement must follow the establishment of capacity.
33

34 Chair Bourke asked for Committee Member feedback on the information included in the presentation
35 slides. Mayor Zoltanski explained that she is excited to start this conversation about capacity. These
36 conversations are needed before transportation solutions are considered. It is important to understand
37 the condition of the canyon there is a desire to protect. She feels the desired conditions should be the
38 framework for the Capacity Study rather than the number of people that can reach the canyon per
39 hour. A sensible Capacity Study should take into account the needs of the canyon. She suggested
40 that the systems of the CWC be considered as a starting point so there is a healthy balance maintained.
41

42 Mayor Zoltanski reported that many National Parks have conducted studies related to capacity. The
43 first question usually has to do with the level of use that is consistent with protecting a limited
44 resource. In Little Cottonwood Canyon, that will have to do with the drinking water for the Salt Lake
45 Valley and beyond. This is an iconic landmark that defines the outdoor recreation lifestyle in Utah.
46 The reason many people have moved to the Salt Lake Valley is to be in close proximity to Little
47 Cottonwood Canyon. She does not believe a Capacity Study should set a specific number, but rather

1 conditions. Once certain conditions exist, there can be a discussion about expanding or limiting
2 access. There should be discussions about what the canyons can sustain before decisions are made.

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4 Mayor Zoltanski stated that a baseline of the watershed conditions would be useful. In addition,
5 visitor survey information could be considered. For example, wait times at resorts, parking
6 conditions, and travel times make visitation undesirable. Emergency response access and
7 environmental conditions are also important to consider. The question should not be how many
8 people can fit into the canyon, but how to sustain the canyon experience that there is a desire to
9 protect.

10
11 Mayor Mendenhall agreed with the comments shared. She mentioned the Utah Department of
12 Transportation (“UDOT”) Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”)
13 Phase I work. She suggested requesting input from UDOT about capacity information that could be
14 useful as part of their eventual analysis of the success of Phase I. Commissioner Gray acknowledged
15 the importance of deferring to experts in the field when it comes to the metrics that are used.

16
17 Mr. Stauss reminded those present that the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation
18 Area Act (“CWNCR”) is a goal of the CWC. The Capacity Committee should consider whether
19 the Capacity Study is something that could inform that work or if it is something completely separate.

20
21 Ms. Blye explained that her areas of expertise are research, creating visitor use management plans,
22 and conducting capacity-based studies. She agreed that the desired resource condition should be the
23 starting point. Commissioner Gray pointed out that Ms. Blye would be a useful resource when it is
24 time to craft the request for proposal (“RFP”). Her input would ensure the desired information is
25 received. Mayor Mendenhall worried there might be a conflict of interest created if she assists with
26 the RFP. She suggested that the purpose of this endeavor be specifically defined during the meeting.
27 Her main goals relate to the CWNCR and making sure the Phase I work is as successful as possible.

28
29 Mr. Adams agreed with the comments shared by Mayor Mendenhall. One purpose of the Capacity
30 Committee is to determine why capacity efforts have not moved forward in the past and how to make
31 a difference this time around. It is also important to understand patterns. For instance, the reasons
32 more people are coming to the Central Wasatch. This could include marketing efforts, the future
33 Olympic Games in Utah, and the private equity ski resorts. In the future, if there is pushback because
34 some people do not agree with the capacity parameters, the Capacity Study can be referred to. Once
35 there is an understanding of the problems that exist, it will be possible to make better decisions.

36
37 Mr. Adams explained that the reason there are concerns about capacity has to do with the number of
38 people in the canyons. The number of vehicles and visitors in the canyons is known, but a lot of the
39 numbers are not readily shared. When it comes to the ecosystem, the feedback loops are often
40 delayed. This was found with Utah Lake and the pollution. The Great Salt Lake is another example
41 of a delayed feedback loop. He noted that there are systems in place that are driving increased
42 demand.

43
44 Chair Bourke pointed out that parking reservations have limited the visitation impacts. Mr. Adams
45 stated that the road and parking conditions have prevented too much visitation from occurring, even
46 though those limitations are often referred to as problems. It might make sense for a Capacity Study
47 to look into something physical that can be impacted, such as the flow of people, while also tracking

1 the ecosystem items that have those longer feedback loops. He shared an example scenario and
2 pointed out that there are difficulties with some of the private businesses, as not all data is accessible.

3
4 Ms. Blye mentioned the example scenario Mr. Adams shared about faucets and drains. When she
5 teaches, this is often referred to as sponges and squeegees, as people are being absorbed and pushed.
6 In the time that she has been in Utah, she has already learned that some people seek out different
7 experiences based on the conditions. This indicates that there is a natural drain in place. However,
8 the question is whether it can be controlled. It is important to think about whether other locations are
9 prepared to welcome visitors who are there to avoid a busier area.

10
11 Chair Bourke asked each Committee Member to share a comment about the purpose of the Capacity
12 Committee. Mayor Zoltanski thought there should be a sustainable canyon framework study that
13 looks at the conditions that promote watershed, recreation, transportation, and environmental
14 stewardship. There should be benchmarking indicators established. Those metrics can serve as a
15 basis for evaluating Phase I and Phase II of the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. Those metrics
16 could also be used to support the long-term goal of the CWNCRA. She explained that the goal is not
17 to manage transportation, but to manage the canyon as a complete and sustainable system.

18
19 Mr. Stauss suggested defining specific elements within the overarching pillars of the CWC. There
20 can be a discussion about what to target specifically when it comes to capacity, such as watershed,
21 recreation, or wildlife habitat. It will then be possible to set some baselines. He stressed the
22 importance of identifying the specific topics that should be covered and then creating metrics to
23 measure success. It is possible to tie into other projects, such as the CWNCRA and Phase I work.

24
25 Mayor Zoltanski noted that there could be broad topics determined, as well as some suggested criteria.
26 It could then be shared with the expert community to see where there has been success in identifying
27 conditions that promote the CWC goals. It is possible to set the goals and then hear from experts.

28
29 Mayor Mendenhall stated that it is possible to define a purpose that is harmonious with the plans
30 made for long-term viability and sustainability. She would like to frame this in a way that it is as
31 valid as any other long-range or medium-range planning effort out there. The purpose of Salt Lake
32 City is to leverage this study in order to achieve some of the long-term goals that already exist. She
33 does not need the study to receive additional information, but to move the CWNCRA forward.

34
35 Ms. Blye thought it was important for the Capacity Committee to determine whether a Capacity Study
36 is what is actually desired. Based on some of the comments, it sounds like there is a desire to take a
37 more holistic approach and determine the desired conditions, thresholds, and indicators. It is possible
38 to look at this from a visitor use management framework. Ms. Blye does not believe it will serve the
39 Committee well to think about things in chunks. As an example, it would not be beneficial to think
40 about the watershed and not think about the visitor experience, as there are connections between the
41 two.

42
43 Mayor Mendenhall agreed that it will not be productive to look at one aspect of management or
44 capacity and not take into consideration the other connected aspects. If there is information that
45 already exists, it makes sense to provide that rather than a study that requests another entity to obtain
46 that information. She does not want the CWC to pay someone to produce what already exists.

1 Mr. Adams pointed out that there appear to be both short-term and long-term goals. One short-term
2 goal could be to stop any new transportation decisions that have the potential to break through the
3 thresholds of capacities yet to be defined. That goes back to understanding why the current pressures
4 exist. The long-term goal could be a traditional Capacity Study that identifies certain conditions.
5

6 Ms. Nielsen reported that individual jurisdictions might have a formal stance on the gondola proposal,
7 but the CWC does not have a collective stance. Chair Bourke asked whether the CWC should take a
8 formal position on the gondola. Ms. Nielsen pointed out that the fourth task has to do with the desired
9 outcome of this endeavor. A formal position on the gondola could be considered as an outcome.
10

11 Ms. Nielsen noted that even if there are desired conditions, indicators, and thresholds set, in order for
12 them to be enforceable, there will need to be adoption from the enforcing authorities, such as UDOT,
13 the US Forest Service, Salt Lake City Public Utilities, and so on. It is unknown if that would happen,
14 so the purpose of this endeavor should not necessarily be enforcement, as that is still uncertain.
15 Commissioner Gray noted that even though enforcement is not something that can be handled by the
16 CWC, the Capacity Study could be a tool for other entities to use in their discussions moving forward.
17 She believes the goal is for the study to be part of the future discussions these entities have.
18

19 Mayor Zoltanski asked if it would be possible to circulate a draft recommendation to the CWC Board.
20 Ms. Nielsen reported that she will listen to the Capacity Committee Meeting recording and will create
21 a document that includes all of the suggested purpose statements. Information can then be circulated.
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23 **DETERMINATION OF MEETING CADENCE**

24 **1. The Committee will Determine its Meeting Cadence.**

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27 CWC Staff recommends that the Capacity Committee meet on a monthly basis. The meetings can be
28 scheduled from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the second Monday of the month. If this schedule is
29 followed, then the next Capacity Committee Meeting will be held on July 13, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.
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31 Ms. Nielsen reiterated that she will collect all of the purpose statements and will circulate that
32 document ahead of the next Capacity Committee Meeting. The purpose can be finalized before the
33 next meeting. There will also be a discussion with Chair Bourke about the next meeting agenda items.
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35 **OTHER ITEMS**

36
37 Mayor Zoltanski reported that her City Council has planned an agenda item tomorrow night to cut
38 CWC funding for Sandy City. This is disappointing and is contrary to her budget recommendation.
39 Those interested can submit a comment about this situation to citizencomment@sandy.utah.gov.
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41 **CLOSING**

42 **1. Chair Bourke will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Capacity Committee Meeting.**

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45 The Capacity Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:06 p.m.
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I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Capacity Committee Meeting held Monday, June 8, 2026.

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes
T Forbes Group
Minutes Secretary
Minutes Approved: _____