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10 **MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) CAPACITY**  
11 **COMMITTEE MEETING, HELD TUESDAY, JULY 7, 2026, AT 2:00 P.M. THE MEETING**  
12 **WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR**  
13 **LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICE LOCATED IN THE BRIGHTON BANK BUILDING,**  
14 **311 SOUTH STATE STREET, SUITE 330, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.**  
15

16 **Present:** Roger Bourke, Chair  
17 Erin Mendenhall  
18 Monica Zoltanski  
19 Jack Stauss  
20 CJ Blye  
21 John Adams  
22 Morgan Mingle  
23 Laura Briefer  
24

25 **Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director  
26 Will McKay, Communications Director  
27

28 **Opening**  
29

- 30 1. **Chair Roger Bourke will Open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Capacity Committee**  
31 **of the Central Wasatch Commission.**  
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33 Chair Roger Bourke called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Capacity Committee Meeting  
34 to order at approximately 2:10 p.m. and welcomed those present.  
35

- 36 2. **Review and Approval of the Minutes of the June 8, 2026, Meeting.**  
37

38 There was not a quorum present at the beginning of the Capacity Committee Meeting. Once there  
39 was a quorum present, the Meeting Minutes from June 8, 2026, were voted on by the Committee.  
40

41 **MOTION:** Roger Bourke moved to APPROVE the Minutes of the June 8, 2026, Meeting. Erin  
42 Mendenhall seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.  
43

44 **Purpose and Need Discussion**  
45

- 46 1. **Committee Members will Discuss their Purpose and Need Statements from the Poll.**  
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1     **2. Committee Members will Set a Purpose and Need for the Capacity Committee.**

2  
3     Chair Bourke shared the Capacity Committee Meeting presentation slides with Committee Members.  
4     He read a quote attributed to Einstein and discussed an article in The New York Times about  
5     overcrowding at Yosemite after suspending the reservation system. There was an image included in  
6     the article that illustrated the conditions. Chair Bourke pointed out that this region is on a trajectory  
7     that could result in similar conditions. Attempts to tackle capacity in the past have failed, but it is  
8     important to understand why those previous attempts failed in order to achieve a different result.  
9

10    Chair Bourke explained that following the traditional path of analyzing the capacity of the resource  
11    may not be the most productive route. It is clear that there is a limit, but looking into a defined number  
12    will not necessarily produce the most useful result. It is important to acknowledge that the growing  
13    demand for access to wilderness-like areas is driven mostly by population growth and economic  
14    interests, but there is a shrinking supply of wilderness-like areas. He suggested looking at how other  
15    areas have dealt with this issue. In the UK and Europe, there are conserved areas. It might be  
16    worthwhile for the Committee to consider how those conserved areas were created and managed.  
17

18    Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, shared information about the Capacity Committee Meeting held  
19    on June 8, 2026. There was a need statement and several purpose statements determined during the  
20    brainstorming session. The need statement is: “To understand the patterns and underlying drivers of  
21    the issues facing the Central Wasatch Mountains before making any “phase shift” decisions.” The  
22    purpose statements determined during the last Capacity Committee Meeting include the following:  
23

- 24       • Whatever is produced will serve as a tool for the resource authorities, and there is value in  
25       producing the study even if it is not enforced;
- 26       • To aid in the passage of the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act  
27       (“CWNCRRA”);
- 28       • Assist in analyzing the efficacy of Phase I and Phase II of the Little Cottonwood Canyon  
29       Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”);
- 30       • To help determine what level of use is consistent with the ideal conditions (watershed, visitor  
31       level, and public safety) in the Central Wasatch;
- 32       • To provide a sustainable canyon framework study to preserve conditions that promote  
33       watershed, recreation, transportation, and environmental stewardship. The study will  
34       establish benchmarking indicators that will serve as a basis for evaluating the ideal conditions  
35       of the Central Wasatch Mountains; and
- 36       • This study should support the long-term goals of the CWNCRRA and work in harmony with  
37       the long and medium-term planning efforts for the sustainability and viability of the region.  
38

39    Salt Lake City, which is the water authority, and presumably other resource authorities, do not need  
40    this study to assist in their management, as those authorities likely already have management  
41    protocols. The Committee also determined that it will be important not to silo elements of the study  
42    due to the interconnectedness of the issues. It was noted that a holistic visitor use analysis framework  
43    would include desired conditions, indicators, and thresholds for those conditions as well as  
44    recommendations about how to manage and monitor for ideal conditions. Ms. Nielsen explained that  
45    the Capacity Committee can now take what was discussed during the last meeting and what was  
46    submitted in the poll that was sent out to Committee Members to determine: a desired outcome  
47    statement, need statement, and a purpose statement. The intention is to finalize those statements.

1  
2 **Desired Outcome Discussion**  
3

- 4 1. **Committee Members will Discuss their Desired Outcome Statements from the Poll.**  
5 2. **Committee Members will Agree Upon a Desired Outcome for the Capacity Committee.**  
6 3. **Discussion of Next Steps.**  
7

8 There was discussion about a desired outcome statement. Chair Bourke reviewed some of the  
9 outcome statements submitted in the Committee Member poll, which include the following:  
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- 11 • A policy and set of procedures for protecting the area from the degradation described;  
12 • The desired outcome is to have foundational objective information about capacity in order to  
13 allocate appropriate resources to the Central Wasatch, make better policy decisions about the  
14 future of the Central Wasatch, and prioritize short- and long-term management strategies; and  
15 • To achieve broad participation and buy-in of a Capacity Study and its outcomes from State  
16 leaders, resorts, Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”), Wasatch Front Regional  
17 Council (“WFRC”), and others.  
18

19 John Adams explained that capacity was previously mentioned in the Mountain Accord. If the growth  
20 paradigm is left as is, this could lead to overuse of the land, threats to the water, and threats to the  
21 environment. It is difficult to convince people to make a change through numbers. People need to  
22 better understand the systems in place and what is driving the growth paradigm. This is not about  
23 eliminating growth but ensuring that growth serves all of the different systems in the canyons.  
24

25 Mr. Adams noted that capacity is often viewed as a limit. If there is a growth paradigm that exists in  
26 the canyons, and people start to talk about limits, then there will immediately be polarization. On the  
27 other hand, if there are discussions about the systems in place and example scenarios like the Great  
28 Salt Lake are shared, then there will be an increased understanding of what capacity really means.  
29

30 Mayor Erin Mendenhall expressed concerns about a study that is invalid to the parties and  
31 conversations there is a desire to influence. She wanted to know what will be accomplished with the  
32 study that will make it valid during future conversations. It is important to think about the right  
33 questions to ask. There is validity in the need for a Capacity Study, but she suggested that the  
34 Capacity Committee consider whether that is the role of the CWC and whether it will be beneficial.  
35

36 CJ Blye does not believe a Capacity Study that determines a finite number is necessarily the best  
37 approach. She suggested thinking about the role of public lands during these conversations. It would  
38 be meaningful to understand some of the restrictions and mandates the U.S. Forest Service has to deal  
39 with. Ms. Blye mentioned desired conditions and the ultimate goal with the CWNCRA. It is  
40 important to consider how long-term use and adaptive management strategies will assist that goal.  
41 She suggested that the Capacity Committee determine the conditions that there is a desire to see. It  
42 is possible to talk about strategies collaboratively, so there is a more holistic process that takes place.  
43

44 Laura Briefer believed that adaptive management is the most important goal. She mentioned the Salt  
45 Lake City references on the presentation slides. Some of that information might not be completely  
46 accurate, so she asked to revisit that at a later time. Ms. Briefer explained that in order to adaptively  
47 manage watersheds for drinking water purposes, there are regular Capacity Studies conducted. She

1 explained that those studies identify the risks and vulnerabilities in current and future conditions. The  
2 studies also look at management and how to engage stakeholders. This includes the Forest Service,  
3 State, ski areas, and other partners. It is possible to be proactive and for the jurisdictions with a role  
4 in management to collaborate in order to increase resiliency and to address risks and vulnerabilities.  
5

6 Ms. Briefer shared information about the 2003 Forest Plan. In the same year, Salt Lake County  
7 created a Land Use Management Plan, and Salt Lake City created a Watershed Management Plan.  
8 Something the CWC could assist with is shared stewardship. Morgan Mingle liked the idea of looking  
9 at capacity as more than a firm number. The study could look at triggers to change management  
10 practices in the canyons. It is essential to have something useful that does not alienate stakeholders.  
11 Ms. Mingle noted that visitor management impacts the number of people who can use these assets.  
12

13 Ms. Nielsen asked if the Capacity Committee should be renamed. She also wanted to know if there  
14 is a unified vision of the desired outcome of the Committee work. Chair Bourke suggested that the  
15 Committee not be renamed until a decision is made about what will move forward. Mr. Adams asked  
16 whether the idea of a Capacity Study is to determine ranges of conditions that impact the management  
17 practices. He wanted to know if this is something that could be used as guidance. Ms. Briefer shared  
18 comments about the Mountain Accord process and explained that the idea is to have collaboration in  
19 decision-making, because there is a lot of fragmentation in management.  
20

21 Chair Bourke wanted to know if the suggestion is to start with a republished list of the principles of  
22 the Mountain Accord. Ms. Briefer thought that would be a good start. During the Mountain Accord  
23 process, all of the stakeholders involved and agencies were documented. However, there have been  
24 changes over the years. It would make sense to consider the jurisdictions that are currently involved.  
25

26 Ms. Nielsen believed the suggestion is to invite others to participate in future Capacity Committee  
27 Meetings. Ms. Briefer was not certain that was the best approach. She pointed out that Salt Lake  
28 County is not currently involved in the CWC work, which means there is a major land use entity that  
29 is not participating in these discussions. In addition, the Municipal Services District and Forest  
30 Service are not involved in the Committee discussions. All of the different entities have their own  
31 plans in place. Many of the policies are solid and meet the previously discussed goal of resiliency.  
32

33 Ms. Blye acknowledged that it might not be possible to create something that is binding, but it is  
34 possible to collaboratively create a stewardship plan. She mentioned the Lake Tahoe region and noted  
35 that there is similar overlap in terms of the commercial interests, visitation, and increased population.  
36 There was a regional stewardship plan created that specifically articulated adaptive management  
37 strategies. The plan also looked at transportation, peak visitation, high volumes of visitors, watershed,  
38 and other visitor use management issues. A similar kind of plan in the Central Wasatch could result  
39 in management strategies that different organizations and entities commit to. If a collaborative  
40 process takes place, then the likelihood of successful implementation becomes higher. There was  
41 discussion about the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (“TRPA”). Ms. Blye noted that TRPA was  
42 one partner in the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan. There were over 30 partners  
43 represented.  
44

45 Ms. Nielsen believed it is most important for the Capacity Committee to determine their desired  
46 outcome during the current meeting. This will create a framework for the next steps. Mr. Adams  
47 asked for additional information about the CWNCRA. Ms. Nielsen reported that if the CWNCRA is

1 passed and implemented, there is a three-year timeframe for a specific Management Plan to be  
2 completed. Some level of visitor use analysis and recreation management would be part of that plan.

3  
4 Mayor Mendenhall does not see the point of the CWC taking on a Capacity Study if it does not  
5 advance the CWNCRA. She stressed the importance of moving the CWNCRA forward and focusing  
6 on controllable goals. Jack Stauss likes the idea of a Shared Stewardship Plan or Adaptive  
7 Management Plan, because that is less polarizing than a Capacity Study. He has been viewing this as  
8 a small research project that could lead to a much larger outcome, which could be the CWNCRA.  
9 This could also be relevant to the Tri-Canyon Trails Plan and other plans in the Central Wasatch.

10  
11 Chair Bourke suggested that ahead of the next Capacity Committee Meeting, there be a menu of  
12 desired outcomes created. Committee Members can then discuss those items and determine what  
13 should remain. Mayor Mendenhall stated that she is not in support of what has been proposed for the  
14 Committee. She asked if anyone else would like to approach the parties who could be involved in  
15 the CWNCRA to determine whether a Capacity Study would be a productive next step. Ms. Blye  
16 supported the idea of reaching out to relevant parties about a potential Shared Stewardship Plan or  
17 Adaptive Management Plan. It could include elements of the visitation data that already exists.

18  
19 Ms. Mingle stated that if there is a desire to move forward with a study or management plan, it is  
20 important to make sure the key stakeholders are part of the process. She agrees that it makes sense  
21 to have stakeholders involved early on in the discussions. This will ensure that whatever is done will  
22 be useful and actionable. Mr. Stauss shared information about Save Our Canyons and explained that  
23 some of the projects are antithetical to the growth models of UDOT and the ski areas. He has heard  
24 UDOT state previously that capacity studies do not work in this setting, so there might be pushback.

25  
26 Ms. Mingle noted that however the Capacity Committee moves forward, it is important to use  
27 language that acknowledges an interest in the quality of the visitor experience and the quality of the  
28 environment. She suggested that language related to carrying capacity be avoided when possible.

29  
30 Ms. Nielsen reported that there is a window of opportunity for the CWNCRA. Given that some sort  
31 of visitor analysis and recreational management framework would be associated with a CWNCRA-  
32 specific Management Plan, it might be best to focus efforts purely on the CWNCRA rather than divert  
33 energy and resources away from that effort. Mr. Adams noted that at the last Capacity Committee  
34 Meeting, Mayor Monica Zoltanski mentioned balance, but he has not heard that word used during the  
35 current meeting. He suggested a Cottonwood Canyons Balance Committee, rather than something  
36 that specifically mentions capacity. There is a desire to balance all of the different interests.

37  
38 Mayor Mendenhall offered to reach out to Senator Kirk Cullimore, Senator John Curtis, and others  
39 who might be appropriate. She can ask broadly if there is certain data needed in order to advance the  
40 conversations about the CWNCRA. She will follow up with CWC Staff about this outreach effort.  
41 Mayor Zoltanski offered to support Mayor Mendenhall during the meetings with relevant parties.

42  
43 Ms. Nielsen believed there is a desire to pause the Capacity Committee work to allow Mayor  
44 Mendenhall to reach out to the relevant parties. Committee Members expressed support for this  
45 approach. There was a vote taken on the Meeting Minutes before the meeting was adjourned.

1 **Other Items**

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3 There were no additional items discussed.

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5 **Closing**

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

8

9 **MOTION:** Laura Briefer moved to ADJOURN the Capacity Committee Meeting. There was no  
10 second. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

11

12 The Central Wasatch Commission Capacity Committee Meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

1 *I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central*  
2 *Wasatch Commission Capacity Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, July 7, 2026.*

3

4 Teri Forbes

5 Teri Forbes

6 T Forbes Group

7 Minutes Secretary

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9 Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_