

Jordan River Commission Event Advisory Committee

December 11, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Location

The meeting was conducted virtually via Zoom, with an anchor location at the Jordan River Commission office.

Meeting Attendees

Event Advisory Committee Members

Jon Glenn, Chair
India Nielsen Barfuss, Vice Chair
Ali Avery, North Salt Lake
Councilmember Silvia Catten, Millcreek
Kyle Fuchshuber, Salt Lake City Sustainability
Todd Munger, Jordan River Foundation (Lehi Environmental Sustainability & Recovery)

Commission Staff

Ren Griffeth, Administrative, Grant & Research Specialist
Caroline Johnston, Event & Volunteer Coordinator
Rachel Lyn, Communications & Outreach Manager
Amelia Miller, Communications & Outreach Intern
Soren Simonsen, Executive Director & Secretary

Visitors and Guests

Anna Habben, Mighty Penguin (Festival Consultant)
Cindy Kindred, Mighty Penguin (Festival Consultant)
Hillary Whittaker, Student

Meeting Minutes

Jon Glenn, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM. The meeting began with a discussion to reorder the agenda. Jon moved the Get to the River Festival report and discussion (item 4C) up to immediately follow public comment, before Committee Business, to accommodate the time constraints of Mighty Penguin staff.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Roll call of Event Advisory Committee members and introduction of other meeting participants in person and online.

Soren Simonsen shared a few membership updates. He announced that the Governing Board had reappointed Councilwoman Silvia Catten and Ali Avery to serve another term. He also announced that Councilwoman Tish Buroker, recently elected Mayor of Riverton, would be stepping down from the Committee due to her new mayoral responsibilities. Soren acknowledged her long-time support and involvement with the Get to the River Festival.

2. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

3. Committee Business

a. [Action Item] Adopt Meeting Minutes from October 9, 2025

Silvia Catten moved to adopt the October 9, 2025, meeting minutes. India Nielsen Barfuss seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee members present.

b. [Action Item] Adopt a Proposed 2026 Meeting Schedule

Soren Simonsen discussed adding a Committee event in 2026 during the Get to the River Festival. These have taken place in the past and have been fun activities for the Committee, such as a picnic or a paddle. He suggested reviving the movie night, which was popular last year, as something the Committee could co-host, and that the date and time, possibly in the evening, could be adjusted to accommodate conflicts.

Ali Avery moved to adopt the 2026 meeting schedule. Silvia Catten seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee members present.

c. Notice of Open Committee Vacancies & Nominations

Soren Simonsen provided a quick update on open positions. There are currently three vacancies following the departures of representatives from Tracy Aviary and Hogle Zoo. With Tish Buroker's term ending at the close of the year, a fourth vacancy will be created, leaving the Committee with the minimum required number of members. Staff plan to conduct additional outreach through social media and newsletters to find new members. The goal is to maintain geographic diversity, including representation across all three counties and different backgrounds and interests.

Soren indicated that he had not received a response from Tracy Aviary yet, noting that the organization is restructuring some positions related to their Nature Center. He plans to follow up with them again after the meeting. Soren noted that the Committee appointments will need to be approved by the Governing Board, whose next meeting is the first Thursday in February, and they hope to have suggestions before the holidays or early next year.

To help narrow the focus for recruitment, a valuable area identified as lacking representation is education, though the current meeting time has posed a challenge for educators in the past. Communications and journalism were another area suggested. Specific names or organizations mentioned as potential contacts included Hamish from the Wasatch Mountain Institute, who is already working on education programming and storytelling around the river.

Sarah Stone from Wonder Bloom School was suggested by India Nielsen Barfuss. An idea was also floated to seek representation from "upstream" areas like Park City, such as the Mountain Trails Foundation, to bridge the perceived divide between valley and mountain impacts.

Jon also suggested using the email and phone number list of people who have participated in river paddles as a source for names.

Hillary Whitaker introduced herself, noting her background as a community garden manager at Community Action Services and Food Bank in Provo and a student of Environmental Science at Utah Valley University (UVU). She highlighted her connections with the Department of Health and Human Services and the potential

to find Park City contacts. She mentioned having worked with people in low-income areas to encourage them to enjoy available outdoor resources.

The discussion also briefly touched upon the inactive Utah County Sustainability Coalition and Daniel Takun Hernandez, a former Tracy Aviary staff member now working at UVU, who was involved in writing about the Native American name for the river. The final point was to confirm whether Ren and Rachel should be included in a follow-up email to India's suggestion.

Kyle also mentioned a couple of contacts within education and outreach in Salt Lake City. One is with Utah Transit Authority, and the other works in his department.

Kyle and India asked for a short description of Committee responsibilities that they can use as they seek to recruit new members.

d. Commission Staff Reports

Rachel Lyn provided an update on the new website, which is targeted to launch in mid-January following Committee reviews planned for the beginning of next year. The new site is designed to integrate the Blueprint Jordan River throughout. Rachel highlighted key sections and various features, including a Habitat and Natural Systems page that links Blueprint goals and strategies to featured projects, as well as an organization page where visitors can find details on organizations, their affiliated projects, and their representatives.

The Visit and Recreate section was also shown, highlighting activities like bicycling with information on safety, e-bikes, and an event calendar for activities like Get to the River Festival events. Rachel noted that the Get Involved section will feature a new standing feed for legislation alongside events and volunteering, and the Learn section will eventually house nature resources and materials for K-12 and professional educators. A new page for the Governing Board and Watershed Council members was also created to provide bios and project affiliations for the individuals involved.

Following the website presentation, Rachel reported on the progress of the education pilot service project. She mentioned a meeting scheduled for the following day with educators who are helping to develop the curriculum. The team will also meet with 6th-grade teachers from Lehi Elementary, with Todd from Lehi City planning to join. The project is focused on developing a day of service to provide action and place-based learning about the Jordan River, covering the water system, stormwater, and water quality. The pilot is slated for January, with plans to expand it for Earth Day and 9/11 day of service during the Get to the River Festival. The Commission received a grant to create video content for in-class learning and to take students on field trips.

Soren provided additional context, explaining that this education project is a response to numerous requests for 9/11 day of service activities, and using these opportunities to focus on watershed health, litter and pollution prevention. He noted that the project aims to involve school districts in meaningful, local activities, highlighting that the Lehi Elementary site is ideal because Dry Creek runs across the school property. The plan includes out-of-the-classroom education at Willow Park to observe the storm system and around the school to see storm drains entering the creek. The long-term vision is to expand this to the entire Alpine School District and, for the 9/11 day of service next year, involve all seven school districts around the Jordan River, and using it as an opportunity to promote the Festival.

e. Upcoming Committee Meeting

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 10:00 AM

4. Commission Events

a. City Nature Challenge

Item 4a was postponed due to time constraints.

b. Golden Spoke

Item 4b was postponed due to time constraints.

c. Get to the River Festival

Soren Simonsen presented the Festival Financial Report, with a comparison of budgeted and actual income and expenses. He reported that they successfully raised sufficient funds for the full budget and, after replenishing the \$5,000 in starting funds, ended the year with a net income of just over \$3,200. He highlighted several expense categories.

The Festival received an unbudgeted \$5,300 in-kind donation in the form of promotional underwriting from KRCL FM Radio for one hundred radio spots. Festival grants were awarded for the full \$9,000 budgeted, consisting of \$2,500 in seed grants and \$6,500 in mini grants. The Celebration and Recognition event came in under its \$11,000 budget, spending just under \$9,000, which included a \$1,000 in-kind venue contribution from Thanksgiving Point. Seasonal staff costs were higher than the \$5,000 budget at \$7,800, but Soren noted that some of the employee's time was split between Festival work and training the new employee, Caroline Johnston. Soren concluded by thanking Mighty Penguin for their fundraising efforts, which allowed them to reach and exceed the full budget with several valuable in-kind donations.

Cindy Kindred thanked the team for the two-year contract extension, noting its positive impact on securing budgets early. She provided a financial overview, detailing past fundraising goals of \$40,000–\$45,000, \$70,000, and \$95,000 over the last three years, which shows a consistent annual increase of approximately \$25,000. For 2026, the fundraising goal is set at around \$120,000. She expressed optimism about renewing all previous sponsors and successfully increasing some, anticipating an additional \$7,500 to \$10,000 in increased donations by asking several current sponsors to raise their commitment by at least \$2,500.

In terms of major sponsors, Marathon has agreed to return as a Presenting sponsor. Cindy also shared the excellent news that the Church of Jesus Christ Foundation has indicated they would like to be a Presenting sponsor as well, though an application is still required. The sponsorship packet used for soliciting new donors was discussed.

Jon suggested enhancing the packet by adding a photo that clearly shows a sponsor banner next to a large crowd.

Cindy and Soren agreed that this was a great idea to demonstrate the value of sponsorship. Ali also suggested replacing a blurry photo on the first slide with a better-quality image.

Cindy highlighted the success of a new lead from Kyle Fuchshuber, who provided contacts in the waste management and recycling industry. Atlas Recycling has already committed \$2,500, and Waste Management is anticipated to contribute at least \$5,000. Cindy is also exploring a broader partnership with recyclers to handle materials collected during river cleanups. She then asked the team for help with introductions to several other prospects, including Staker Parsons, Ducks Unlimited/Trout Unlimited, Northrop Grumman, Big D Construction, and The Point development.

Jon offered to follow up on a contact for U of U Health.

Soren noted that the overall health sector, including IHC and HCA, is a good fit.

Anna Habben also suggested pursuing the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce due to their H2OATH water-wise initiative.

Finally, Soren, Cindy, and Anna discussed updating the generic contact email on the packet to a specific, branded Festival email address.

Rachel Lyn confirmed that the Commission could set up using the “GetToTheRiver.org” domain to ensure fundraising inquiries are handled directly and efficiently.

5. Other Events & Resources

a. 2026 Day of Service Opportunities

- i. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday – Day of Service, Monday, January 19, 2026
- ii. Earth Day – Day of Service, Wednesday, April 22, 2026
- iii. 9/11 Remembrance Day – Day of Service, Friday, September 11, 2026

6. Communications, Engagement & Outreach

Item 6 was postponed due to time constraints.

7. Adjourn

Ali Avery moved to adjourn. India Nielsen Barfuss seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:36 AM.

A meeting recording, minutes, and other information will be available following the meeting at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/1039093.html>.

Meeting minutes prepared by Ren Griffeth, and Soren Simonsen, Commission Secretary.

Adopted February 12, 2026.