FIVE COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

Steering Committee Meeting

MINUTES

Date:	October 14, 2026
Time:	12:30 PM (called to order at approximately 12:42 PM)
Location:	Festival Hall Conference Center, Rooms 5 & 6, 96 North Main St., Cedar City, Utah (Hybrid)
Presiding:	Commissioner Gil Almquist, Washington County (presiding in the absence of Chair Hollingshead)
Called to Order by:	Commissioner Almquist

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Steering Committee meeting was called to order at approximately 12:42 PM on October 14, 2026, at Festival Hall Conference Center in Cedar City, Utah. The meeting was conducted in hybrid format. Steering Committee members introduced themselves for the record.

Steering Committee Members Present (In Person)

- Gil Almquist, Washington County Commissioner (Presiding)
- Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commissioner
- Celeste Meyeres, Kane County Commissioner
- Nolan Davis, Mayor, City of Milford
- Mollie Halterman, Mayor, City of Parowan
- Melani Torgersen, Mayor, City of Escalante
- Burke Staheli, Washington County School District
- Tyler Fails, Beaver County School District
- Stephanie Hill, Iron County School District
- Donna Law, Southern Utah University

Steering Committee Members Present (Online)

- Jerry Taylor, Garfield County Commissioner (online)

Steering Committee Members Absent

- Wade Hollingshead, Beaver County Commissioner (Chair)
- Ray Spencer, Mayor, Town of Orderville
- Taylor Glover, Kane County School District
- Curtis Barney, Garfield County School District
- Brad Last, Utah Tech University
- Jean Krause, Mayor, Town of Virgin

Staff Present

- Darin Bushman, Executive Director
- Jeff Shumway, Chief Financial Officer

- Jen Wong, HR Director
- Michael Johnson, Program Manager, Community and Economic Development (online)
- Sheri Reber, Program Director, Aging Services (online)
- Kelly Reeder, Assistant Program Director (online)
- JayCee Finicum, Accounting Specialist (online)
- Carrie Sigler, Child Care Resource Agency (online)
- Carrie Schonlaw, Five County AOG (online)

Guests

- James Leavitt, District Director, Congresswoman Celeste Maloy's Office
- Gary Webster, Field Representative, Senator Mike Lee's Office
- Colette Cox, Director, Center for Rural Development, Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity (online)
- Nicole Black, Operations, Southern Utah Economic Alliance (online)

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Review and Approval of Draft Minutes: August 19, 2026 and September 30, 2026

The draft minutes of the August 19, 2026 Steering Committee meeting and the September 30, 2026 Special Steering Committee meeting were presented. No corrections were offered.

Motion:	Approve the August 19, 2026 Steering Committee minutes and the September 30, 2026 Special Steering Committee minutes as presented.
Moved by:	Commissioner Celeste Meyeres
Seconded by:	Burke Staheli, Washington County School District
Vote:	Approved unanimously

4. State, Federal, and Education Partners Reports

Colette Cox, Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity (online)

- The Rural Communities Opportunity Grant (RCOG) is open through 5:00 PM on October 30. It funds economic development infrastructure, workforce development, and business retention, expansion, and recruitment. Projects identified through the Blueprint planning process receive priority.
- The Rural Economic Development Incentive is open November 1 through 15. It provides $6,000 per high-wage job created and is available everywhere in the region except St. George City. Retail and construction jobs are not eligible.
- Applications for the no-cost Blueprint Economic Planning program open November 1. The program accepts 8 to 10 areas per year.
- The rural team is shifting its focus toward business expansion, attraction, recruitment, and retention, working directly with larger employers in each county.
- In response to a question, Ms. Cox offered to return with the GOEO grants manager to present grant success stories from the five-county region.

Nicole Black, Southern Utah Economic Alliance (online)

- SUEA is available to provide regional letters of support and data for RCOG applications.
- SUEA is preparing for the 47G Zero Gravity Summit at the end of October, bringing together aerospace, advanced manufacturing, and advanced air mobility partners.

Donna Law, Southern Utah University

- SUU was selected by NASA as one of seven aerospace hubs nationally.
- SUU opened the new Eccles Music Center on September 24 and launched a new Master of Social Work program.
- This year marks 10 years for the Beverly Taylor Sorenson Center for the Arts and Southern Utah Museum of Art, 65 years for the Utah Shakespeare Festival, and 40 years for the Utah Summer Games.
- About 180 SUU students completed post-flood service projects in Beaver County.

James Leavitt, Congresswoman Celeste Maloy's Office

- The International Trade Commission will hold a hearing on the Section 201 lamb and sheep investigation this Friday; the Congresswoman will testify virtually. A supporting letter drew 70 congressional signers from both parties.
- The federal emergency declaration for the region has been made. Communities having difficulty accessing eligible resources should contact the office.
- The office is developing legislation to address postal service issues in rural communities and invited input from local governments.
- A regulatory reform summit on AI policy will be held October 15 at the UVU Lehi campus from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM.
- Land conveyance requests are being prioritized, with a focus on smaller, water-related conveyances.
- Members recognized Stephanie Hill for her work with the Cedar Mountain group on the lamb and sheep issue, and noted the importance of domestic food production. Members also discussed workforce readiness and the value of technical education.

Gary Webster, Senator Mike Lee's Office

Mr. Webster arrived late and presented after the branding discussion.

- A cloture vote is expected November 9 on bipartisan public lands and permitting reform legislation addressing NEPA, the National Historic Preservation Act, data centers, energy, and geothermal permitting.
- He also reported on the Fix Our Forests Act and the Great American Outdoors Act. Members discussed forest management, low-interest loans for sawmills, and longer timber contracts.

5. HR Report

HR Director Jen Wong presented the September staffing report.

- Total current staff is 66. Allison McCoy has retired, and Jeff Shumway is the new CFO.
- An Aging Services position has been interviewed, and an offer is pending.
- Community Support Services has an open Quality Control Specialist / Energy Auditor position at the Cedar City weatherization office.
- Positions are posted on the AOG website, DWS, Indeed, and social media, and shared with staff. Open positions are in-person.

6. Financial Report

Executive Director Bushman formally introduced CFO Jeff Shumway, who comes to the AOG after 18 years with Southwest Utah Public Health. He noted that, for compliance, the AOG will make approval of the financial report a regular agenda item at each meeting going forward.

- With 25% of the fiscal year complete, the AOG has received 10.5% of anticipated revenue and spent 18.5% of anticipated expenditures. Revenue lags because most funding is reimbursement-based, and some reimbursements are quarterly or semiannual. Staff is working to bill state and federal agencies sooner to improve cash flow.
- The September financial snapshot shows unrestricted cash of about $703,000, with about $620,000 in July and August reimbursements pending.
- Delinquency in the revolving loan fund remains a challenge. A $225,000 write-off appeared in last year's audit, and about $200,000 in additional potential write-offs has been accrued this year. The AOG has enrolled in the state tax offset program so delinquent borrowers' income tax refunds can be redirected to the AOG.
- Staff confirmed an existing agreement with EDA obligates the AOG to continue operating the Southwest Micro Loan Program. Going forward, staff intend to require collateral where possible.

Motion:	Approve the financial report as presented.
Moved by:	Commissioner Paul Cozzens
Seconded by:	Stephanie Hill, Iron County School District
Vote:	Approved unanimously

7. Five County Privacy Policy

Executive Director Bushman presented the proposed privacy policy, which is required to be posted on the AOG website. It covers information collected through the website, email communications, and text messaging. The info@fivecounty.utah.gov address is active for privacy inquiries.

Motion:	Approve the Five County privacy policy as presented.
Moved by:	Mayor Nolan Davis
Seconded by:	Tyler Fails, Beaver County School District
Vote:	Approved unanimously

8. Director's Report

Staff Recognition

- Director Bushman recognized AOG employees for their dedication and willingness to take on multiple roles, citing examples such as the aging program's weekly check-in calls to seniors.

Five County Summit

- The AOG hosted a summit at Bryce Canyon for city officials and planning commissions with about 129 participants. Post-event surveys were very positive, and many attendees asked for the event twice a year.
- The event was produced at essentially no cost to the AOG through a grant from the Ombudsman's office and partner support for the facility. Sessions included navigating the legislative funding process (Lincoln Shurtz and Shawn Guzman), emergency planning, and a two-hour planning commission session.

HEAT Building

- A prospective tenant for the sublease on the St. George building withdrew at the last minute. The state will continue to help pay the lease through the end of the year, after which the AOG will carry roughly $5,000 to $6,000 per month until the space is leased.

Tonaquint Building Roof and Building Fund

- The building fund holds about $55,000, roughly one-third of the quotes received. State procurement requires three bids; contractors are visiting the building now.
- Staff are evaluating repair versus replacement. Non-guaranteed repairs are about $6,000. Campbell Architecture recommends replacement and keeping concrete tile because of the St. George heat. A partial replacement would result in mismatched tile.
- Facilities charges to programs are not keeping pace with costs, and staff expects to increase those charges going forward.

Records Retention

- A recent records request revealed that a former deputy director's email account had not been preserved and cannot be recovered. The IT provider was previously instructed to cancel accounts when employees left.
- A temporary fix is in place to archive email, and certain former employees' accounts are being maintained. The AOG is also implementing a full Microsoft 365 backup (Veeam), since deleted Teams channel content is otherwise unrecoverable after 90 days.
- A records retention policy is being drafted. Members asked about downloading records instead of keeping accounts active (possible, but difficult to search) and noted that inactive accounts are a cybersecurity risk.
- Director Bushman described a recent phishing incident in which an email impersonated an employee's spouse, and noted ongoing cybersecurity training for staff. An AI policy is also in development.

Other Updates

- Two leased Xerox copier contracts at the Cedar City weatherization office are being eliminated; replacement machines were purchased outright at lower cost.
- A presidential disaster declaration makes Beaver and Piute Counties eligible for EDA disaster infrastructure funds at a reduced match, as well as SBA assistance. EDA will present to both counties.
- An off-site leadership training is scheduled for November 30 with the theme of courageous leadership. Retired Utah Highway Patrol Colonel Mike Rapich will be the keynote speaker. Steering Committee members are invited.

9. Discussion about AOG Branding

Executive Director Bushman presented the results of the rebranding investigation the Committee approved in August. No action was requested.

- The FCAOG acronym is not widely understood, while "Five County" is broadly recognized. Options considered were a modest public-name change, a full legal rename, or a complete new name. Staff do not recommend a full rename or new name because of the cost and risk to bylaws, contracts, and federal registrations.
- The recommended direction is to use "Five County" as the public-facing name, keep the legal name unchanged, use "Association of Governments" as a secondary descriptor, and retire the FCAOG acronym. The AOG would keep its existing Five County web domain and social media accounts.
- New logo concepts would use a darker color palette and list all five counties. Staff narrowed 55 concepts to six, using AI in the design process. Program logos would always be used together with the Five County logo. Rollout would begin with the website, email, and social media.

- Several members said the Five County name carries strong recognition and equity. One commissioner noted that "Five County" is not descriptive and suggested a "Southwest" name; staff explained that "Southwest" is already widely used in the region. Members also suggested listing the five county names without the words "Counties" or "Utah."

Director Bushman invited members to send additional feedback by text or email.

10. Committee Members Roundtable

- Members expressed appreciation for the AOG's direction and services, and encouraged support for upcoming funding participation efforts with city councils and school boards.
- School district members asked that AOG services benefiting schools and students be identified more explicitly, since district participation would come from limited funds. Director Bushman noted that many AOG programs serving families with children affect school attendance and student stability.
- Commissioner Meyeres reported a recent rock slide in Zion National Park that closed east-west passage for about a week and a half, and thanked park leadership for working with the county to reopen sooner. She encouraged members to support an interagency mutual aid and indemnification agreement with federal agencies.
- The presiding officer thanked Director Bushman for his first 18 months of leadership.

11. Other Business

The next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2026. A Finance Committee meeting will be held earlier the same day.

12. Closed Session

The Committee voted by roll call to move into a closed session as permitted under the Open and Public Meetings Act (Utah Code Section 52-4-205) for a strategy session to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation.

Motion:	Move into closed session to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation.
Moved by:	Commissioner Celeste Meyeres
Seconded by:	Burke Staheli, Washington County School District
Vote:	Approved unanimously by roll call vote

The Committee returned to open session by roll call vote. No action was taken in the closed session.

Motion:	Close the closed session and return to open session.
Moved by:	Burke Staheli, Washington County School District
Seconded by:	Tyler Fails, Beaver County School District
Vote:	Approved unanimously by roll call vote

13. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:26 PM.

Motion:	Adjourn the meeting.
Moved by:	Burke Staheli, Washington County School District

Seconded by:	Commissioner Paul Cozzens
Vote:	Approved unanimously