



# Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development

OFFICE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## Governor's Rural Partnership Board Meeting

April 28, 2020 from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

*Virtual Meeting*

---

<b>Present:</b>	Lt. Governor Spencer J. Cox, Steve Styler, Brian Higginbotham, Michael McCandless, Stephen Lisonbee, Shannon Ellsworth, Geri Gamber, Kent Wilson, Emily Niehaus, Joan Hammer, Robert Miller, Michael McKee, Jason Yerka, Zac Whitwell, Jeff Peterson, Tim Munns, Dustin Jansen, and Brian Raymond
<b>Regrets:</b>	
<b>Staff:</b>	Val Hale, Ryan Starks, Beckie Page, Rebecca Dilg, James Dixon, Nan Anderson, Scott Cheney, Lynne Mayer, Jim Grover, Kamron Dalton, and Dane Ishihara
<b>Guests:</b>	28 rural partners
<b>Minutes:</b>	Joshua Wiggins

---

### Call to Order

*Steve Styler, GRPB Co-Chairperson*

### Welcome and Roll Call

*Steve Styler, GRPB Co-Chairperson*

*Beckie Page, Business Services, GOED*

Beckie Page, the virtual meeting administrator, gave the following notice: "This is a public meeting taking place via remote, electronic transmission by GoToMeeting, with some participants attending by phone. The electronic format is allowed under the Utah Open Public Meetings Act, and these proceedings are being recorded as is required under that statute. As a reminder to all in attendance, these proceedings, presentations, the agenda, and all of the materials provided for this meeting, together with the minutes of this meeting, and any chats or texts between members of the Board, will also become part of the public record of this meeting. Once this meeting begins, all participants will be muted. If you are a board member and would like to comment or make a motion, please remember to unmute your microphone. For all others, please utilize the chat feature and we will address questions when appropriate."

Beckie Page then performed the roll call at Steve Styler's request. Mr. Styler welcomed the board members and members of the public.

### Lt. Governor's Remarks

*Lt. Governor Spencer J. Cox, GRPB Co-Chairperson*

Lieutenant Governor Spencer Cox thanked the board members for their devotion in meeting virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lt. Governor was also involved with the governor's press conference at 1:30 P.M., so he needed to leave the meeting early. Some highlights of his remarks include:

- The governor will announce at the press conference that effective May 1, the state will officially move from the "red phase" of the response to the "orange phase," which will allow for increased economic activity with precautions, including wearing masks and maintaining six-feet distance wherever possible.
- Utah is among the top five states for the number of tests performed per capita and is in the bottom five for mortality rates.
- The Uintah Basin has suffered economically due to the decrease in demand for oil.

### Approval of the Minutes

*Steve Styler, GRPB Co-Chairperson*

Dr. Brian Higginbotham moved to approve the minutes from the February 19, 2020 board meeting. The motion was seconded by Stephen Lisonbee.

Voting:

- Lt. Gov Spencer Cox: ABSENT
- Steve Styler: AYE
- Dr. Brian Higginbotham: AYE
- Stephen Lisonbee: AYE
- Mike McCandless: AYE
- Shannon Ellsworth: AYE
- Geri Gamber: AYE
- Joan Hammer: AYE
- Mike McKee: AYE
- Robert Miller: AYE
- Mayor Emily Niehaus: AYE
- Jeff Peterson: AYE
- Brian Raymond: AYE
- Zac Whitwell: AYE
- Commissioner Kent Wilson: AYE
- Jason Yerka: AYE
- Tim Munns: AYE

The motion passed; the minutes were approved.

## **Welcome of New Board Member, Dustin Jansen, Division Director, Director of Utah Division of Indian Affairs**

*Steve Styler, GRPB Co-Chairperson*

Mr. Styler welcomed the new GRPB member Dustin Jansen, who is the division director of the Division of Indian Affairs for the state of Utah. Jansen introduced himself to the board.

## **GRPB Appointments and Reappointments Notice and Create Committee**

*Steve Styler, GRPB Co-Chairperson*

Mr. Styler reminded the board that each member can only serve a maximum of two terms of four years each. Tim Munns, who represents the agricultural industry, and Mike McCandless, who is an at-large member, will reach the end of their second terms. Mr. Styler indicated that there is a statutory need to constitute a nominating committee to select the new board members. After recounting a history of the previous time this occurred for the board and consulting with Rebecca Dilg, Mr. Styler suggested that six board members could volunteer to be on the committee, including the two outgoing members. Tim Munns and Mike McCandless agreed to serve. Shannon Ellsworth, Jason Yerka, Robert Miller, and Geri Gamber volunteered to serve on the committee.

Jeff Peterson moved to create a nominating committee composed of these six board members: Tim Munns, Mike McCandless, Shannon Ellsworth, Jason Yerka, Robert Miller, and Geri Gamber. Brian Raymond seconded the motion. Dr. Brian Higginbotham moved to make a friendly amendment that Mike McCandless serves as the chair of the nominating committee. The friendly amendment was seconded by Stephen Lisonbee.

Voting:

- Lt. Gov Spencer Cox: ABSENT
- Steve Styler: AYE
- Dr. Brian Higginbotham: AYE
- Stephen Lisonbee: AYE
- Mike McCandless: AYE
- Shannon Ellsworth: AYE
- Geri Gamber: AYE
- Joan Hammer: AYE
- Mike McKee: AYE
- Robert Miller: AYE

- Mayor Emily Niehaus: AYE
- Jeff Peterson: AYE
- Brian Raymond: AYE
- Zac Whitwell: AYE
- Commissioner Kent Wilson: AYE
- Jason Yerka: AYE
- Tim Munns: AYE

The amended motion passed; the nominating committee was constituted.

Mike McCandless informed the board that the process of selecting new members will likely take time. He stressed that the nominating committee will make recommendations for the governor, who will make the final decision.

For those interested in applying for a position on the board, navigate to <https://boards.utah.gov> and apply. Notify Rebecca Dilg at [rdilg@utah.gov](mailto:rdilg@utah.gov) once you have applied.

## **Ryan Starks' Remarks**

*Ryan Starks, Managing Director of Business Services, GOED*

Ryan Starks, the Managing Director of Business Services at the Governor's Office of Economic Development, officially introduced himself to the board. He has also been serving as the interim director of the Office of Rural Development since Linda Gillmor took a new position with the Department of Agriculture. The search for the new director has been paused during the coronavirus outbreak. Mr. Starks recognized and expressed his appreciation for the team members of the Office of Rural Development. He also reported on the Utah Leads Together Small Business Bridge Loan program; over 30% of the loans were awarded to rural Utah businesses.

## **Open Public Meetings Act Training**

*Scott Cheney, Assistant Attorney General*

As required by statute, Scott Cheney, the Assistant Attorney General, trained the board on the Open Public Meetings Act, which fulfilled the requirement for 2020. His presentation is included with these minutes as *Attachment A*.

## **Presentation and Discussion of 2020 Rural Legislative Directives**

*Steve Styler, GRPB Co-Chairperson*

In 2019, the board presented the governor with three legislative directives:

1. The GRPB recommends the creation of a new post-performance 'Rural Economic Development Tax Increment Finance' (REDTIF) incentive, an expansion of the existing High Cost Infrastructure Tax Credit (HCITC), or a policy modification of the existing EDTIF program to include tiered incentives and employment-level requirements that are more accessible for the expansion of existing rural businesses or relocation of businesses to rural areas of the state. The GRPB further recommends that a Rural Advisory Committee made up of GRPB members and rural GOED board members be created to participate in the review of rural tax incentive applications.
2. The GRPB recommends that the legislature create or expand an existing business expansion and retention grant program for rural communities to directly promote the growth of existing small business, economic diversification, job creation, and the development of strategic plans or implementation of economic development goals identified in current strategic plans.
3. The GRPB recommends that an additional percentage of Transient Room Tax (TRT) funds be made available to counties of the 3rd to 6th class as well as flexibility in spending for needed infrastructure to address the demands created by robust tourism visitation.

Mr. Styler reviewed each directive. Directive 2 was largely accomplished with the creation of the Rural County Grant Program in Senate Bill 95 from the 2020 General Legislative Session. In regards to directive 3, Joan Hammer said that House Bill 280 by Representative Albrecht passed but only covered 4th through 6th class counties. Directive 1 remains unfulfilled but will continue to be a priority for the next session. Val Hale, executive director of GOED, expressed his appreciation for everyone's hard work on the REDTIF idea.

## **Presentation of Rural County Grant Program**

*Ryan Starks, Managing Director of Business Services, GOED*

*James Dixon, Program Manager, Office of Rural Development, GOED*

Mr. Starks introduced the Rural County Grant Program as created by Senate Bill 95, and James Dixon presented an overview of the program, as well as some of the proposed rules, especially as pertaining to the GRPB. The presentation is included with these minutes as *Attachment B*.

The GRPB has responsibilities tied to this new program. Within the next couple of weeks, Ryan Starks and James Dixon will work together to determine a deadline for suggestions for the Part B application and scoring matrix. They will then create a draft of each to be discussed at the next GRPB meeting.

## **Discussion from GRPB Members: Recommendations for 2021 Session**

*Tim Munns, GRPB Agriculture Representative*

*Joan Hammer, GRPB Tourism Representative*

*Mayor Emily Niehaus, GRPB Utah League of Cities and Towns Representative*

Tim Munns, Joan Hammer, and Mayor Emily Niehaus each presented their recommendations for legislative priorities for the 2021 Session.

Mr. Munns outlined the issues facing the agricultural industry and reiterated the points he submitted last April to the board, including private property rights, pressure on the agricultural lands, and the water supply. He also thanked the board for the two terms he served.

Ms. Hammer gave a status of the Tourism industry, particularly as it has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Surviving the economic distress caused by the disruption is the industry's top priority.

Scott Cheney suggested that the board's priorities for the session be utilized in the Rural Grant Program scoring matrix for Part B projects.

Mayor Niehaus reflected on the priorities she submitted last year, including addressing the lack of housing, lack of public transportation to and from urban centers, intergenerational poverty, and loss of human capital (the "brain drain"). Looking forward, Mayor Niehaus emphasized the importance of broadband and the idea of fostering resiliency and diversification in rural communities.

## **Adjournment of the Meeting**

Before closing the meeting, Steve Styler asked what further business needed to be discussed.

Dr. Brian Higginbotham requested that the GRPB encourage full coverage of the state for the Rural Online Initiative. The last session's House Bill 2 expanded support of the Rural Online Initiative to Duchesne, Millard, Tooele, and Box Elder counties. Steve Styler asked that Paul Hill, the Rural Online Initiative director and attending this meeting, give an update at the next GRPB meeting. Dr. Hill agreed to do so.

Scott Cheney recommended that the GRPB invite other state boards and commissions to future meetings to learn how they operate grant programs.

Ryan Starks informed the board that the Office of Rural Development is updating their website and creating a partner-wide brochure to help rural businesses navigate the programs available.

Joan Hammer moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Zac Whitwell.

Voting:

- |                           |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| • Lt. Gov Spencer Cox:    | ABSENT |
| • Steve Styler:           | AYE    |
| • Dr. Brian Higginbotham: | AYE    |
| • Stephen Lisonbee:       | AYE    |
| • Mike McCandless:        | AYE    |
| • Shannon Ellsworth:      | AYE    |
| • Geri Gamber:            | AYE    |
| • Joan Hammer:            | AYE    |

- Mike McKee: AYE
- Robert Miller: AYE
- Mayor Emily Niehaus: AYE
- Jeff Peterson: AYE
- Brian Raymond: AYE
- Zac Whitwell: AYE
- Commissioner Kent Wilson: AYE
- Jason Yerka: AYE
- Tim Munns: AYE

The motion passed; the meeting was adjourned.