**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION MILLCREEK CANYON COMMITTEE MEETING HELD MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2020, AT 1:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY WITHOUT A PHYSICAL LOCATION, AS AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNOR’S EXECUTIVE ORDER DATED MARCH 18, 2020.**

**Present:**

**Committee Members:** Chair Ed Marshall, John Knoblock, Tom Diegel, Brian Hutchinson, Paul Diegel, Del Draper

**Government Representatives:** Beckee Hotze (U.S. Forest Service), Wayne Johnson (Salt Lake County), M. Leon Berrett (Salt Lake County), Martin Jensen (Salt Lake County), Helen Peters (Salt Lake County)

**Public:** Hilary Jacobs, Polly Hart

**Staff:** CWC Deputy Director Blake Perez, CWC Communications Director Lindsey Nielsen, Office Administrator Kaye Mickelson

Chair Ed Marshall called the meeting to order at 1:13 p.m.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the October 26, 2020, Meeting.**

The minutes were reviewed and accepted.

**MOTION:** Paul Diegelmoved to approve the minutes of October 26, 2020, as amended. John Knoblock seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

1. **Discussion of MCC Committee’s Ideas and the U.S. Forest Service, Salt Lake County, and Metropolitan Service District.**

Chair Marshall congratulated Beckee Hotze from the U.S. Forest Service and her staff for completing the Rattlesnake Gulch Trailhead. Ms. Hotze signed a decision that would add approximately 1 to 1 ½ miles to the trail and would take care of needed switchbacks on the upper portion of Rattlesnake Trail. The switchbacks would attempt to remove deeper areas that are prone to erosion. She thanked the partners that made sure the Forest Service was able to obtain funding for these types of projects.

Chair Marshall discussed the Millcreek Canyon Committee letter. The Committee had chosen to address reduced user conflict and increased public safety for a few primary reasons:

* Representatives from the Forest Service, Salt Lake County, Unified Police Department (“UPD”), Millcreek City, and the Municipal Services District had identified the issues as important matters. Millcreek Canyon Committee Members agreed on their importance, based on their own experiences as frequent users of the canyon;
* Millcreek Canyon Committee Members heard that Salt Lake County and the Forest Service had become frustrated by the number of people seen violating the rules and by the number of complaints that came into the county; and
* None of the user groups on the Committee wanted to see those frustrations resolved by the Forest Service or the county closing Millcreek Canyon to user groups on alternating even and odd days.

Chair Marshall shared some clarifying points related to the letter:

* The letter represented Millcreek Canyon Committee ideas. Committee Members recognize the authority of the Forest Service, Salt Lake County and the Municipal Services District to make decisions and determine whether or not to implement these ideas and alternatives; and
* No law changes were proposed. Additionally, no changes were proposed that would increase the rights of any one user group.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee Members were introduced to the Government Officials. All official members are also members of the CWC Stakeholders Committee and include:

* Paul Diegel, former Executive Director of the Avalanche Control Center;
* Tom Diegel, Board Member of the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance;
* John Knoblock, Chair of the Trails Committee for the Forest Service Stakeholders Council and the CWC Stakeholders Council;
* Brian Hutchinson, advocate for bicycling and the environment;
* Del Draper, President of the Secret Lakes Homeowners Association; and
* Ed Marshall, Chair of the Millcreek Canyon Committee.

There are also unofficial members of the Millcreek Canyon Committee. Chair Marshall noted that the unofficial members had attended and participated in most of the meetings and include:

* Polly Hart, President of FIDOS, the Salt Lake Valley advocacy group for dogs and dog owners;
* Hilary Jacobs, Vice-President of FIDOS;
* Mike Mikalev, representative from the Salt Lake County Bicycle Advisory Council; and
* Kathleen Bratcher, user of Millcreek Canyon and an advocate for dogs and bicyclists.

Chair Marshall noted that most of the Millcreek Canyon Committee Members are frequent users of Millcreek Canyon. Many are hikers, cyclists and dog owners. Chair Marshall informed the Government Officials that CWC Staff attends and monitors all Millcreek Canyon Committee Meetings but does not participate in the debates or discussions. The ideas in the letter came from the Millcreek Canyon Committee Members as citizens rather than from CWC Staff.

The Committee had debated the ideas included in the letter for 2 months. They then finalized and drafted the letter for an additional 2 months and spent 2 more months having the letter reviewed and approved by the CWC Stakeholders Council and the CWC Board of Commissioners. After 6 months of work, the Millcreek Canyon Committee was anxious to hear from the Government Officials about their ideas. Chair Marshall asked that during the discussions:

* Committee Members focus strictly on the ideas presented in the letter; and
* Government Officials that believed a specific idea would not be workable offered alternatives that might be better suited.

Chair Marshall opened up discussions related to the area above the winter gate when it is closed. He shared the main concerns for various user groups:

* Cyclists had concerns about off-leash dogs on even days and dogs on extension leashes. They were also concerned about certain user groups taking up the entire trail. These issues made it difficult to pass when coming downhill; and
* Pedestrians and dog owners had concerns about cyclists and skiers coming downhill too fast and those that come downhill without warning.

Chair Marshall asked the Government Officials a clarifying question about the road above the winter gate when the gate is closed.

* Does it officially and legally become a trail at that time?

Ms. Hotze believed that once the gate was closed, it became a trail. Wayne Johnson and Leon Berrett agreed. Mr. Berrett added that Salt Lake County Public Works stops maintaining the road as soon as the gate is closed.

Chair Marshall asked the Government Officials a clarifying question about enforcement.

* If the road becomes a trail, what significance does that have for enforcement? Is the Forest Serviceable to enforce dog rules and cycling rules above the winter gate during that time?

Ms. Hotze noted that the cycling concerns related to speed, which was not under Forest Service control. The UPD assessment was that cyclists weren’t speeding. Cyclists tend to look like they are going much faster than they actually are. Ms. Hotze wondered if there was a way for the Committee to find out how many users were actually exceeding the speed limits. She felt it was important to determine whether speeding was a concern. However, she noted that it was not something the Forest Service could enforce. Mr. Hotze reported that the dog leash law was a county law and not a Forest Service order. If the Forest Service were to ticket dog owners, it would require a change in laws. She shared that the Forest Service gave an additional $10,000 to UPD this year for enforcement. They hoped to increase that number to $50,000 next year.

Chair Marshall asked whether the UPD was able to enforce both dog laws and bicycle laws above the winter gate when it is closed. Mr. Johnson believed they could enforce off-leash dog laws because it was a county ordinance. However, he felt that speeding on a trail would be harder to enforce. It would likely not be a serious concern unless harm was caused.

Chair Marshall noted that the exact speed of the cyclists was less of a concern. It was more about whether or not cyclists would be able to stop in time, since there may be dogs loose on even days and children wandering around on the trails. He wondered who could enforce that and whether it would be possible to achieve equal enforcement. Mr. Johnson felt that was a question for UPD and noted that he hadn’t heard complaints related to speed issues above the winter gate.

Chair Marshall wondered whether the increased Forest Service funds would enable UPD to have someone patrol the 2 miles above the winter gate, from the winter gate to Elbow Fork, where most of the user conflicts occurred. Ms. Hotze clarified that the Forest Service doesn’t direct UPD to spend the money in any particular way. However, the Forest Service could make suggestions. She mentioned that a graffiti group was able to obtain an additional $50,000 in funding for UPD to patrol Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon for graffiti. They purchased electric bicycles and were able to ride up and down the trails to enforce county, state, and federal violations against nature resource damage.

Paul Diegel noted that an important issue had been touched on. There were some conditions where the existing speed limits seemed too fast for other user groups. Enforcement was one issue but another issue related to whether or not the speed limits were correct in all conditions. Chair Marshall noted that the goal of the Millcreek Canyon Committee was to not change rules or laws. However, it appeared that certain issues would require the county to adopt a different ordinance above the winter gate when the gate is closed. John Knoblock felt that a lot came down to personal responsibility. Users needed to be safe and do their best to avoid accidents. Ms. Hotze shared that the Forest Service was hoping to provide educational opportunities for people being dropped off by shuttle at Guardsman Pass.

Chair Marshall wondered whether it would be up to the Forest Service to lower the speed limit for bicycles above the winter gate when it is closed. Ms. Hotze offered to look into the process. Chair Marshall noted that tradeoffs had been made while creating the proposals in the letter. For instance, dog advocates agreed to increased enforcement of rules relating to dogs but expected there to be enforcement of the rules related to cyclists and skiers in return.

Enforcement staffing was discussed. Chair Marshall commented that the Millcreek Canyon Committee supported the idea of hiring education and enforcement officers, as outlined in the Forest Service Communication Plan. He wondered whether the district would hire officers with the increased toll revenue. Ms. Hotze reported that when the fee increase went through, COVID-19 occurred and the booth had shut down. The Forest Service had been uncertain about the revenue and were hesitant to implement some of the measures. However, there would be additional seasonal workers this winter. The Forest Protection Officers would be helping with parking and in areas where there were compliance issues. Ms. Hotze reported that the officers had been informed about various hot spots but they would determine where to patrol and when. Mr. Johnson commented that the Forest Protection Officers would be equal opportunity enforcers and look at all infractions. He reiterated that leash laws would be easier to enforce than speed limits.

Paul Diegel didn’t believe that bicyclists exceeding the existing speed limits was a serious concern. He noted that the only place he was able to comfortably exceed the speed limit while cycling was at the bottom of the canyon. He felt that voluntarily slowing down, keeping users on their respective sides of the road, and being aware that others have the right to use the road would make a noticeable difference.

Chair Marshall asked about the Communication Plan and the desire to hire a Project Manager for Millcreek Canyon. Ms. Hotze reported that the plan was very preliminary but they were currently narrowing down a position description. With the proposal for the Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) grant, the Forest Service would still be unable to do the trailheads and all of the associated trails and restrooms. They were looking to hire either a dedicated Project Manager, an engineer, or a landscape architect. It would likely be a two to four-year term.

Chair Marshall noted that many of the recommendations from the Millcreek Canyon Committee related to education and encouragement. He asked how the Forest Service felt about having signs for those purposes. Ms. Hotze clarified that she was not opposed to signs. However, she was opposed to adding signs for the sake of adding signs. She believed that when there were too many signs, people read less. Ms. Hotze mentioned a cohesive sign design for kiosks that would be rolled out next year. She wanted to implement the same cohesive strategy in Millcreek Canyon. In terms of general signs, anything along the roadway (such as crosswalks and speed limit signs) was the responsibility of the county. Ms. Hotze liked the idea of a Trail Master Plan that would focus on a sign design plan for the canyon. She wanted to ensure that all signs were strategic and thoughtful.

Chair Marshall wondered whether there would be an opportunity for Committee Members interested in signage to participate directly with the Forest Service. Ms. Hotze referenced an Environmental Stewardship Focus Group. She suggested that one or two members of the Committee could help with the Focus Group. Ms. Hotze also offered to send Forest Service sign guides to the Millcreek Canyon Committee. Mr. Johnson hoped that everyone could work together to create a plan that made sense for all involved. He noted that a lot of the education and encouragement signs would be at trailheads and trail access points. Mr. Berrett believed that it would be possible to make specialty signs and install them under the direction of the Municipal Services District and Forest Service. If they were on the public right-of-way, however, Public Utilities would step in to determine that the signs were allowable under the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (“MUTCD”).

Chair Marshall brought up the Committee recommendation to divide the road above the winter gate when it is closed. They believed it would work more effectively for all user groups. The suggestion was seven feet for downhill cyclists and skiers and the remaining 15 feet for pedestrians and dog walkers. He noted that approximately 90% of users are pedestrians and dog walkers. However, cyclists and skiers have a special need because of the speed differentiation. The Committee proposed using standing signs with heavy bases to inform users of the division. Mr. Berrett felt that standing signs on the trail would not work due to grooming equipment. There could be signs on the side instead. Those signs could be taken down during the summer months.

Ms. Hotze reported that she had discussed the division proposal with her team. They wanted to look into it and develop the idea further. She noted that something similar was working well in City Creek and had also been implemented in Corner Canyon with some success. She stated that in those areas, people had been conditioned to use the area appropriately. There weren’t signs everywhere. In Millcreek, the Forest Service would have to look into how to implement the division so users would follow the guidelines. Ms. Hotze believed the division of user groups was more like 50/50 than 90/10. She felt it would be worthwhile to find out more about usership.

Chair Marshall wondered whether a 50/50 division of the road with a movable sign on the lane marker would make more sense. Ms. Hotze noted that signs on the road would be problematic due to the number of people in the area. Someone could hurt themselves accidentally. Instead, she felt it was best to focus on changing the mindset of users in the area.

Del Draper stated that the general rule was uphill traffic goes up on the right side of the road and downhill traffic comes down the other side. However, when there were dogs, pedestrians, and varying speeds of travel thrown together, it became a free for all. He believed the City Creek model may work better in the long-run. Paul Diegel felt it was important that all foot traffic stays to the south side of the road. He noted that there was currently no standard of travel. By establishing a standard, a lot of user conflicts would be eliminated. Ms. Hotze noted that the Forest Service was looking into the issue to determine what the process would look like. She reported that the program of work was full through the 2021 fiscal year, which goes until September 30, 2021. The issue would be prioritized for the 2022 fiscal year.

John Knoblock suggested that a sign stating, “Pedestrians Stay to the South Side of the Road,” be used as a way to encourage pedestrians. Ms. Hotze expressed concerns about short-term trials that involved signs or regulations. She felt it created confusion for users. It would be better to come up with a well thought out plan and move forward with set rules instead. She noted that surveys had been conducted this year and approximately 54% of the people who visited the forest had never visited before. 56% of people staying at the campgrounds had never visited before. It was important that with so many new users, all signs and regulations were clear and consistent.

Tom Diegel mentioned the sign templates discussed by Ms. Hotze. He wondered if the new signs would replace the current signs. He suggested that there could be initial signs at the information kiosks and additional signs 100 yards up the trail. That would prevent information overload but still deliver all of the essential information to visitors. Ms. Hotze clarified that the sign templates would replace the kiosk signs at trailheads in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon first. She noted that the Forest Service was being strategic about what was included on the kiosk signs. Ms. Hotze believed a sign plan for the canyon would be beneficial but would require further coordination with the County.

Tom Diegel noted that without testing various signs and strategies, it would be difficult to determine what would actually work in the canyon. Ms. Hotze commented that a lot of pre-work was conducted by the Forest Service beforehand. During the pre-work, the Forest Service looked at what had been done in other places. An educated decision was then made about whether a similar strategy would work for user groups in a particular area. She noted that it was easier for local groups, municipalities, counties, and cities to implement changes. It took a lot more time and effort for the Forest Service to implement changes. Ms. Hotze believed that too much signage could lead to sign saturation. She felt it was important to determine the most critical pieces of information and focus the signs accordingly.

Mr. Draper wondered whether the Forest Service had jurisdiction over the road above the winter gate when it is closed. Ms. Hotze stated that the Forest Service would have authority once the road became a trail. She added that whenever there are conflicting laws in an area, national laws take precedence. If local ordinances or counties have laws that are more restrictive than the laws on Forest Service land, they tend to defer from the local laws. For instance, the dog leash law is a local law that the Forest Service defers to because it is more restrictive than the Forest Service rules, which only require that dogs be on leashes in developed areas. Mr. Johnson confirmed that once the gate is closed, the road becomes a trail and is no longer under Salt Lake County rules. He added that peer pressure would be a determining factor in user compliance in the canyons. Mr. Paul Diegel agreed and stated that standards needed to be established and communicated. He offered to send out photographs of creative and attention-grabbing signs via email.

Ms. Hotze reported that her District gets six million visitors per year, but she currently had 19 permanent employees and 55 seasonal employees. They had been focused on the FLAP grant proposal and making sure that is successful. The FLAP grant would allow the Forest Service to make an official bicycle lane and handle other important projects. Ms. Hotze noted that the Forest Service had also been focused on the Great American Outdoors Act. She appreciated the importance of Millcreek Canyon to the Committee Members and stated that the Forest Service was doing their best to meet the needs of the public. Mr. Hotze believed the Forest Service had the same end goals as the Millcreek Canyon Committee. She added that the County’s lawyers conducted a review of the trail above the closed winter gate when she first arrived, and they concluded that it was not a “developed area”.

Chair Marshall discussed issues related to leashes. The Committee believed the off-leash rule on odd days should remain in place. Mr. Johnson stated that there were no intentions to modify the rule as far as he was aware. Ms. Hotze noted that this is County law, and she deferred to Mr. Johnson on this issue. Paul Diegel noted that there was a lack of clarity surrounding the existing dog leash rules. He didn’t believe many people knew that an extendable leash didn’t count as a six-foot leash. Paul Diegel believed that more defined rules would be beneficial. Mr. Johnson agreed that they could use some clarification. Ms. Hotze added that sometimes people intentionally found loopholes in sign language.

Chair Marshall discussed the road when it is open above the winter gate. One idea that the Committee had was to reduce the speed limits above the winter gate to 25 miles per hour until you reach the top four-tenths of a mile. The speed would then reduce to 15 miles per hour. Mr. Berrett stated that they could look into the suggestion. Brian Hutchinson didn’t see a reason for the speed limit to be more than 20 miles per hour in areas where it becomes narrow. Mr. Berrett stated that he would look at the speed limits and determine whether adjustments were needed. Ms. Hotze commented that the Forest Service would support Salt Lake County in their decision because it was a county road.

Chair Marshall mentioned the lane that had been created from the toll booth up to the top of the Boy Scout gates. He noted that it was not a dedicated bicycle lane because it was not wide enough. He wondered if signs could be added to instruct pedestrians to use that dedicated lane. Mr. Berrett clarified that it was more of a shoulder than an unofficial bicycle lane. He noted that the FLAP grant funds could make that shoulder into a permanent bicycle lane. Mr. Knoblock commented that the typical protocol was that pedestrians would walk along the shoulder of the road facing traffic. However, the lines had been shifted toward the downhill side in order to improve the width of the shoulder going uphill. There wasn’t much space for pedestrians to walk facing traffic if they were going uphill. Mr. Knoblock believed the idea was to get all of the pedestrians to use the uphill shoulder lane, whether they were walking up or down the canyon. Mr. Berrett stated that he could look into that issue and suggested possible advisory signs. Ms. Hotze commended the Millcreek Canyon Committee for bringing up these important issues.

Mr. Berrett felt it was important not to give pedestrians a false sense of security with the addition of pedestrian signs. He noted that there were times when the installation of a crosswalk had increased pedestrian accidents. It was essential to focus on solutions, but there needed to be a methodical approach to avoid unintended consequences. Mr. Johnson believed the Millcreek Canyon Committee letter had been crafted thoughtfully and deliberately. Ms. Hotze reported that she had begun to draft a response to the letter. She would defer to Salt Lake County for areas that they had authority over. Ms. Hotze would reach out to the Millcreek Canyon Committee to discuss a sign plan and to choose a representative from the Committee for the Focus Group.

Mr. Hutchinson wondered whether there would be road widening along the upper road above the winter gate. Ms. Hotze noted that the Forest Service was currently working with the Federal Highway Administration (“FHWA”) on that. The Programming Committee from FHWA would make the final decision about the FLAP grant. The final proposal was due in March and the Forest Service was currently working to whittle down their list of priorities. If the FLAP grant was approved, there would likely be a 2024 fiscal year implementation for the proposed projects. Ms. Hotze noted that it would be expensive to widen the road up to the Upper Big Water Trailhead parking lot. There could also be visual and environmental impacts. All impacts would be taken into consideration as the Forest Service and Salt Lake County continued to focus on their priorities.

Paul Diegel noticed that parallel parking at the end of Maple Grove had been labeled, “No Parking,” recently. This move had eliminated approximately 20% of the parking in the area. He wondered how that would impact the visitor experience. Ms. Hotze reported that this had been done to ensure that Forest Service employees had access to the canyons. Mr. Berrett also noted that if all of the parking spots were filled, it could become difficult for snowplows to move around. The empty spaces would make movement much easier.

Chair Marshall thanked the Government Officials for attending and participating in the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting. He felt it had been extremely valuable. Chair Marshall expressed gratitude that the efforts of the Committee had been taken seriously. He invited the Government Officials to attend another meeting in January or February 2021 for a brief follow-up discussion.

1. **Updates from Committee Members and Others Who Have New Information.**

Mr. Knoblock updated the Committee on trail issues. He reported that the final funding for the Rattlesnake Gulch Trail project had not yet been approved by the Mayor or County Council. He had visited the area over the weekend with professional trail builders to walk the alignments and receive input. A Request for Proposal (“RFP”) was issued on the Professional TrailBuilders Association website. However, the money for the project had not been secured. Half of the money was grant money, but it was a matching grant. The other half of the funds were needed from the County. Otherwise, the grant money would likely be lost.

Mr. Knoblock also shared an update related to the Upper Pipeline Trail above Elbow Fork. There was a third of a mile left to finish in the spring. A trail builder had been hired for that. He added that Zinnia Wilson from the Forest Service was looking into funding for a new bridge that would replace the one that had been crushed by a tree during a recent windstorm.

Mr. Draper reported that there were no updates to share about the Boy Scouts camp. Mr. Knoblock noted that the National Boy Scouts were experiencing financial difficulties. If there were serious financial issues on a national level, that could impact the Boy Scouts on a regional level as well. Mr. Tom Diegel stated that the Senate Public Lands, Forests, and Mining Committee had taken up debate on a bill that Senator Mitt Romney put up. The goal was to make the Bonneville Shoreline Trail into a mountain bikeable trail. This involved the use of land behind the Boy Scouts camp. Mr. Knoblock clarified that the parcel of land involved with the bill was no longer owned by the Boy Scouts Camp. It had been sold several years ago.

Tom Diegel updated the Committee on an email exchange he had with Ms. Hotze regarding the Church Fork restrooms. The Forest Service was looking into the issue. Tom Diegel also noted that he had spoken with Sergeant Ed Twohill. Sergeant Twohill had clarified the levels of enforcement. He also stated that enforcement and education on leash laws was a high priority.

1. **Discussion of Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”) Summit Event.**

Chair Marshall congratulated CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez on the Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”) Summit. Mr. Perez thanked all that were able to participate. He reported that there had been a lot of good feedback from summit participants. CWC Staff was now in the process of following up on unanswered questions and working on a report. Mr. Perez stated that MTS Summit facilitator, Julianna Christie was also creating a report. She would present it to the CWC Board at the December meeting. There would also be a Transportation Committee Meeting on December 1, 2020, to discuss the next steps.

Mr. Perez reported that the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) had released amendments to their alternatives. Two new alternatives had been included and the information was available on their website. Mr. Perez noted that there had been a lot of support during the MTS Summit for the work that the Millcreek Canyon Committee had done.

Mr. Knoblock asked about the timeline for an MTS decision. He noted that it had originally been planned for the end of the year. Mr. Perez noted that the UDOT amended alternatives report could impact discussions and decision-making. It put more options on the table and there may need to be additional discussions. Mr. Perez noted that the added alternatives related to cog rail and an aerial system from the La Caille Base Station. Snowsheds were also included.

Mr. Knoblock wondered how the work of the CWC MTS would match or influence the UDOT Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”). Mr. Perez clarified that the MTS work was a policy direction from the CWC. He believed that UDOT would consider all information and transportation-related discussions.

1. **Other Business Relating Directly to Millcreek Canyon.**

No additional business was shared.

1. **Adjournment.**

**MOTION:** Del Draper moved to adjourn. Paul Diegel seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:05 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting held Monday, November 23, 2020.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

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