

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) BUDGET/ FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ELECTRONICALLY ON THURSDAY, JULY 22, 2021, AT 12:00 P.M.**

**Present:**  Chair Jeff Silvestrini, Mayor Harris Sondak, Councilor Jim Bradley

**CWC Staff:** Executive Director Ralph Becker, Deputy Director Blake Perez, Communications Director Lindsey Nielsen, Office Administrator Manager Kaye Mickelson (audio only)

**Visitor Use Study Work Group Members:**

Carl Fisher, Annalee Munsey, Will McCarvill, Jan Striefel, Patrick Nelson, Helen Peters

**Others:** Pat Shea

**OPENING**

1. **Jeff Silvestrini Will Conduct the Meeting as Chair of the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee.**

Chair Jeff Silvestrini called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. He explained that it was a joint meeting of the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Budget/Finance/Audit Committee and the Visitor Use Study Work Group. The purpose of the meeting was to further discuss the proposal for Phase II of the Visitor Use Study.

1. **The Committee Will Consider Approving the Draft Minutes from the June 23, 2021, Budget/Finance/Audit Committee Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Councilor Bradley moved to approve the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee Meeting minutes from the June 23, 2021, meeting. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Mayor Sondak noted that he had been unable to fully review the minutes as the materials were shared only shortly before the start of the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee Meeting. Councilor Bradley suggested that the minutes be approved at the next meeting.

**VISITOR USE STUDY PHASE II DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Committee and Work Group Will Discuss and Make Any Recommendations Regarding Funding, Costs, and Timeline for the Phase II Portion of the Visitor Use Study.**

Chair Silvestrini reported that the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee Meeting would determine whether to make a recommendation to the full CWC Board related to funding, costs, and the timeline for the Phase II portion of the Visitor Use Study. There had been discussions related to Phase II of the Visitor Use Study at the recent CWC Board Meeting. However, there was no action item scheduled and the Board was unable to take action at that time.

Chair Silvestrini believed the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee should forward a recommendation to pay for Phase II of the Visitor Use Study over two years. The ecological aspect of the study would be funded in the first year. There would then be attempts to raise money for the social aspect of the study through contributions from organizations or member jurisdictions. Chair Silvestrini explained that there was some urgency to have a decision made at the next CWC Board Meeting to partner with the U.S. Forest Service on the social aspect of the study. CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez, reported that Dr. Jordan Smith from Utah State University believed that partnering with the Forest Service could save up to two-thirds of the $89,000 related to social costs.

There were certain risks and rewards to consider. Chair Silvestrini believed the risk had to do with whether the Forest Service would look for the kinds of things Dr. Smith wanted to see in the study. The reward had to do with cost savings but also the timeline. The Forest Service indicated that they may object to the social aspect of the Visitor Use Study taking place at the same time as their own study. This was due to possible confusion of the data. Deciding to partner with the Forest Service early on could increase the likelihood that the requirements of Dr. Smith and his team were met. Chair Silvestrini believed the CWC would be missing an opportunity if they chose not to partner with the Forest Service on the social aspect.

Councilor Bradley wondered if the Forest Service would view this as a true partnership. He also asked what the partnership would involve. Chair Silvestrini believed that specifics would not be known until Dr. Smith participates in further discussions with the Forest Service.

Carl Fisher commented that it was encouraging to hear about a possible partnership with the Forest Service. He reported that the Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey is done every seven years. Mr. Fisher believed that the survey would provide a baseline for comparables as it relates to social perspectives in the Wasatch. Partnering with the Forest Service could offer additional information to the Visitor Use Study and would also save money.

Pat Shea shared a question in the Zoom chatbox. He wanted to know who said that the Forest Service may object to the CWC doing the social aspect of the study at the same time. Chair Silvestrini clarified that Dr. Smith mentioned a conversation he had with the Forest Service. The Forest Service indicated that they did not want two surveys taking place at the same time as it could lead to confusion of the data. CWC Executive Director, Ralph Becker, explained that the Forest Service approached the CWC. They were reluctant to have the CWC study take place at the same time as their own study due to possible confusion of the data. Additionally, the Forest Service stated that whoever was handling the Visitor Use Study would need a special use permit. As a result, there could be potential obstacles if the CWC did not partner with the Forest Service.

Will McCarvill noted that the CWC should be careful as the Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey was forest-wide. It covers the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest and that could result in data that was not useful to the CWC. He reported that in 2016, the Forest Service funded a Pleasant Grove Ranger District study that the Mountainland Association of Governments contributed to. The study was specific to the Pleasant Grove Ranger District. Mr. McCarvill stressed the importance of there being Salt Lake City Ranger District-specific data or Central Wasatch-specific data. It was also important to consider the type of questions being answered. For instance, in the Pleasant Grove Ranger District study, there was nothing about preserving ecology or visitor impacts. The Visitor Use Study needed actionable data.

Chair Silvestrini commented that those concerns were connected to the risk he described earlier. The CWC would need to ensure that the Forest Service was studying areas relevant to the Visitor Use Study. The partnership could be a positive one, but there was some level of risk. He suggested that those concerns be shared with the Utah State University team. Dr. Smith could speak to the Forest Service further to ensure that the necessary data for the study would be obtained.

Chair Silvestrini asked CWC Staff to reach out to Dr. Smith about their concerns. Mr. Perez noted that they would do so. He added that part of Phase I was developing the indicators to measure. Those indicators would be carried over into Phase II. Based on previous discussion with the Forest Service, the CWC indicators would be tacked onto the survey in addition to the Forest Service measuring tool. He reiterated that CWC Staff would reach out to both Dr. Smith and the Forest Service. Mr. Becker noted that solid points had been made about making sure the study was of real value to the CWC and others. If the partnership moved forward, the details would need to be clearly defined in order to stay on track.

Mayor Sondak appreciated the information that Mr. McCarvill had sent out related to the Pleasant Grove Ranger District study. He noted that he could not support the social aspect of the Visitor Use Study as he did not believe that the data would be useful. Mayor Sondak discussed the previous Budget/Finance/Audit Committee Meeting Minutes and noted that there had been a disjunction between the actual minutes and the Visitor Use Study Memo drafted July 6, 2021. Mayor Sondak felt that the minutes were correct but the memo that summarized the motion was misleading. The minutes included a motion that stated the following:

* The Budget/Finance/Audit Committee recommends to the CWC Board that they move forward with a phased approach for the Visitor Use Study. The CWC would engage their own resources for the ecological aspects of the proposed Phase II study and wait to see what financing was available before moving forward with the social aspects of the proposed Phase II study.

Mayor Sondak noted that the motion in the minutes was what he had wanted to propose. The way the motion was framed in the memo was that the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee agreed to move forward with the Visitor Use Study Hybrid Proposal in a phased approach. The total cost would remain $288,212.64 and the funding would be split over two fiscal years. Mayor Sondak did not believe the memo clearly reflected the motion that was made.

Chair Silvestrini commented that the reason to split the funding over two fiscal years was to allow time to do fundraising for the social aspect because it was something that certain Visitor Use Study Work Group Members felt was important. He noted that it would be a CWC Board decision about whether to invade reserves to fund the social aspect. The Budget/Finance/Audit Committee could make a recommendation but it would ultimately be up to the CWC Board.

Chair Silvestrini believed that the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee needed clarification about what the Forest Service would study and whether that work would align with what Dr. Smith and the CWC felt needed to be studied. He suggested that the Committee move toward a recommendation that would propose the following:

* The CWC will provide funding for the ecological aspect of the study;
* Split the funding over two fiscal years;
* Cooperate with the Forest Service, if possible (this would be determined by further communications between Dr. Smith and the Forest Service); and
* Include a provision that the CWC fund the social aspect of the study in another fiscal year through donations and/or through a decision from the CWC Board to invade reserves.

Annalee Munsey appreciated the time the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee dedicated to discussing Phase II of the Visitor Use Study. She noted that when the Visitor Use Study Work Group initially looked at the study, they felt it was important that there be a comprehensive study that included Big Cottonwood Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, and Millcreek Canyon. Additionally, it was important to look at the physical, ecological, and social aspects. Ms. Munsey felt it was beneficial that the Forest Service was willing to cooperate and work with the CWC. She believed the responses would be valuable.

Councilor Bradley asked Mayor Sondak if he believed the focus should be on the ecological aspect of the study. Mayor Sondak confirmed this. He commented that he would prefer to move forward with the physical and ecological aspects and not move forward with the social aspect. He questioned the usefulness of the information and did not feel it was a good use of CWC funds.

Chair Silvestrini noted that several Stakeholders Council Members adopted positions against taking certain actions because a Visitor Use Study had not been conducted. If certain Stakeholders Council Members were unwilling to take a position related to transportation or other areas without the results of the full study, it would be beneficial to include the social aspect as well. He appreciated the comments made by Mayor Sondak but felt that the social aspect of the study may be necessary for the organization to move forward with decision-making. However, Chair Silvestrini agreed that the CWC should find another way to fund that aspect of the study. Spreading it out over two fiscal years would provide additional time to look for funding sources.

Mayor Sondak understood the point made by Chair Silvestrini. He did not mind being outvoted. However, if Chair Silvestrini felt it was important for the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee to have a unified voice, he was open to that but did not necessarily want to support something that it did not make sense to spend money on.

Councilor Bradley wondered what would happen if information from the social aspect of the study came in and the CWC ended up questioning the validity of that information. Mayor Sondak noted that someone could say that they did not feel the results were a good basis for decision-making. He would look at all study results with an open mind. Councilor Bradley shared the skepticism expressed by Mayor Sondak about the value of the social aspect of the study. It was noted that the social aspect would cost less than originally proposed if the partnership with the Forest Service took place. Chair Silvestrini hoped that CWC Staff could facilitate communication between Dr. Smith and the Forest Service. Questions to consider included:

* How would the cooperation work?
* What would be studied?
* Would the study be adequate?
* How could the CWC augment the study?

Chair Silvestrini hoped the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee could report the answers to those questions to the full CWC Board at the next meeting. It was also important to convey to the CWC Board the types of discussions that had taken place during the current Committee Meeting.

Mayor Sondak made note of the response received from Dr. Smith related to the mobile phone data. It was an expensive part of the study. He noted that the explanation was interesting and if the mobile location data was not included, the Utah State University team would not be able to conduct as much ecological research. Mr. McCarvill felt it was important to have a finer grain analysis of use. Mayor Sondak wondered whether Mr. McCarvill had received the attachments mentioned by Dr. Smith in his response. Mr. McCarvill did not. He wondered if it would be possible to ask Dr. Smith for specific citations.

Discussions were had about appropriate language for a motion. Mayor Sondak asked about the two-year funding timeline. He noted that the Forest Service would begin their study relatively soon and he wondered if the funding delay would impact that cooperation. Mr. Perez reported that the timeline was communicated to the Forest Service. The cooperation should still work if an agreement was made or there was some sort of resolution at the August CWC Board Meeting.

**MOTION:** Chair Silvestrini moved that the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee recommend that the CWC consider a resolution to move forward with a Visitor Use Study that funded the ecological component of the study in the fiscal year and considered funding the social aspect of the study in a second fiscal year, hopefully using monies donated to the CWC either by private organizations, member jurisdictions or the State of Utah, to the extent possible. Those donations would complete the social aspect of the study if the Forest Service and Dr. Smith could come to terms about a cooperation arrangement that would be valuable to the inputs that Dr. Smith and Utah State University believe are important to the social aspect of the study. The Budget/Finance/Audit Committee further asks that the CWC Board consider whether and to what extent to invade reserves to fund the balance of the social aspect of the study in the second fiscal year. Councilor Bradley seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

**ADJOURN MEETING**

1. **Jeff Silvestrini Will Adjourn the Meeting as Chair of the Budget/Finance Committee.**

The Central Wasatch Commission Budget/Finance/Audit Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:53 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Budget/Finance Committee Meeting held Thursday, July 22, 2021.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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