

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) BOARD MEETING HELD MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2021, AT 3:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY WITHOUT A PHYSICAL LOCATION**

**Board Members:** Chair Christopher F. Robinson

Mayor Jeff Silvestrini

Mayor Mike Peterson

Mayor Jenny Wilson

Mayor Harris Sondak

Councilor Jim Bradley

Councilor Marci Houseman

Councilor Max Doilney

Carlton Christensen, Ex Officio

**Staff:** Ralph Becker, CWC Executive Director

Blake Perez, CWC Deputy Director

Lindsey Nielsen, CWC Communications Director

Kaye Mickelson, CWC Office Administrator

Shane Topham, CWC Legal Counsel

**Excused:**  Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Mayor Dan Knopp

**Others:**  Ned Hacker

Bobby Sampson

Laura Briefer

Annalee Munsey

Bob Kollar

Chris Cawley

Jim Ehleringer

Patrick Nelson

Patrick Shea

Steve Van Maren

Deborah Case

Peter Corroon

Catherine Kanter

Barbara Cameron

Megan Nelson

Zane Doyle

Carl Fisher

Dave Fields

Giles Florence

Dennis Goreham

Jordan Smith

Will McCarvill

Abi Holt

Alex Schmidt

Marshall Alford

Marian Rice

**OPENING**

1. **Chair of the Board Christopher F. Robinson will Open the CWC Board Meeting Plus Comment on the Electronic Meeting, No Anchor Location, as Noted Above.**

Chair Chris Robinson called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m.

The Legislature, pursuant to Section 52-4-207(4), required the Board to make a determination, which was as follows:

‘I, as the Chair of the Board of Commissioners (the “Board”) of the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”), hereby determine that conducting Board Meetings at any time during the next 30 days at an anchor location presents a substantial risk to the health and safety of those who may be present at the anchor location. Although the overall instances of COVID-19 have diminished somewhat over the past several months, the pandemic remains and the recent rise of more infectious variants of the virus merits continued vigilance to avoid another surge in cases, which could again threaten to overwhelm Utah’s healthcare system.’

1. **(Action) The Board will Consider Approving the Minutes of the October 4, 2021, Board Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Councilor Bradley moved to approve the October 4, 2021, Board Meeting Minutes. Mayor Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

**COMMITTEE AND PROJECT REPORTS**

1. **Executive Committee: Meeting Took Place on Monday, October 18, 2021, 3:30 p.m.**

* **Lindsey Nielsen and Dr. Phoebe McNeally will Provide a Brief Update on the Status and Changes to the Environmental Dashboard Project and Timeline.**

Chair Robinson reported that an Executive Committee Meeting was held on October 18, 2021, and noted that the Meeting Minutes were included in the packet. Much of the Executive Committee Meeting was in anticipation of the CWC Board Retreat, which was scheduled for November 5, 2021. He explained that a decision was made to hold the Retreat virtually.

CWC Communications Director, Lindsey Nielsen explained that Dr. Phoebe McNeally was not present at this meeting, but Dr. Jim Ehleringer from the University of Utah was available to answer questions. Ms. Nielsen shared an overview of the Environmental Dashboard process. She reported that the CWC Board voted to approve a slight budget amendment that would allow the project team at the University of Utah to fully bring the dashboard to life.

When the Environmental Dashboard was conceived, it was intended set to be a static, written report that would outline the function and health of the Central Wasatch. In 2018, the Environmental Dashboard Steering Committee, under the Mountain Accord, moved to pause the work being done to give the CWC time to start. The ownership of the Environmental Dashboard was then transferred to the CWC. In 2019, the Environmental Dashboard work contract was transferred from The Brendle Group to the University of Utah. Phase I of the Environmental Dashboard, under the new contract with the University of Utah, began in August 2019. Phase I ended in December of 2019 and culminated with a Phase I Report. Phase II of the Environmental Dashboard began in January 2020 and was currently in progress.

Ms. Nielsen reported that the Environmental Dashboard was originally intended to include five elements including water, air, ecosystem, soil/plants, and wildlife. Through Phase I of the new contract with the University of Utah, Drs. McNeally and Ehleringer proposed new dashboard elements that would better and more fully encompass the data that was being amassed. The elements that were included in the Environmental Dashboard were:

* Air quality and climate.
* Water.
* Vegetation community.
* Plants and animals; and
* Geology and soil.

Ms. Nielsen stated that there had been conversations with the project leads for the Environmental Dashboard and the Visitor Use Study to look at a possible sixth element. A human element could be added to explore the human impact on the mountains. Ms. Nielsen explained that this had been highly requested, and the Environmental Dashboard Steering Committee Members supported the addition. Coordination between the Environmental Dashboard team and Visitor Use Study team began to see where there may be appropriate overlap between the two studies and the data. Ms. Nielsen noted that the funding paid to date for the Environmental Dashboard was just under $500,000. She added that the Environmental Dashboard would be fully functional by June 2022.

Councilor Marci Houseman thanked Ms. Nielsen for the summary. She was pleased to see the CWC invested in the dashboard and appreciated the update. Mayor Sondak asked how the Environmental Dashboard would be updated in the future. He also asked Ms. Nielsen to share information related to future expenditures. Ms. Nielsen explained that CWC Staff would meet with the project team at the University of Utah at the start of the year to develop a maintenance plan. The plan would include dates for projected data updates, associated costs, and information about who would be responsible for maintenance. It was anticipated that the University of Utah would handle maintenance. Ms. Nielsen explained that certain data sets changed more often than others. For example, water data changed more than soil data. As a result, maintenance would be specific to each element rather than there being an overarching maintenance plan for the Environmental Dashboard.

* **Dr. Jordan Smith will Present the Visitor Use Study Phase I Report and Findings to Commissioners for Discussion.**

Dr. Jordan Smith shared a presentation with the CWC Board related to the Visitor Use Study Phase I Report. He stated that he would overview what had been accomplished as part of Phase I and share information about the plan moving forward with Phase II. Dr. Smith explained that the Phase I effort was a scoping assessment to determine what data existed. It also established scientifically grounded indicators (ecological, physical, and social characteristics) and distinct types of outdoor recreation settings within the Central Wasatch. The focus was on the ecological, physical, and social characteristics of outdoor recreation settings because that was how recreation settings were typically understood. Additionally, it was how Federal Agencies worked to establish desired conditions.

The work in Phase I and Phase II of the Visitor Use Study was informed by the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council and their guidance on establishing visitor use management and monitoring protocols. The Interagency Visitor Use Management Council guidance was consistent across all major Federal Agencies that provided outdoor recreation opportunities. Dr. Smith stated that the intent behind Phase I was to build a foundation to better understand:

* The data that currently existed related to outdoor recreation.
* The spatial and temporal patterns or trends; and
* The impacts that outdoor recreation could have across the Central Wasatch.

Dr. Smith explained that the goal was to define and understand the indicators so that specific management actions could be taken in the future. He reported that Phase I of the Visitor Use Study began earlier in the year and the work would be done by the end of 2021. Phase II had already begun with some data collection and would continue through the entirety of 2022. This would ensure that there was a full year of data, which would make it easier to understand visitor use and associated impacts.

Phase I of the Visitor Use Study involved multiple tasks, such as a literature review to identify all of the existing information about outdoor recreation use in the Central Wasatch. Both peer review literature and grey literature were reviewed and documented. He noted that a good amount of research had been done on outdoor recreation uses in the Central Wasatch. The literature related to the Central Wasatch could be categorized into three categories:

* Cross-Sectional and Geographically Targeted Research:
  + Research that might have been completed to address a specific hypothesis or a specific research question. The research was very geographically targeted, and the data was typically collected for a short period of time.
* Long-Term and Geographically Misaligned Research:
  + Studies or data sets that had data that was longitudinal by comparison and went back to the late 80s or 90s as it related to recreation use or access. However, the data was collected at a geographic scale and was not meant to guide management actions.
* Contextual Information:
  + Literature that was not speaking to any primary data that was collected but was more discussing the evolution of the Central Wasatch and the policies or management of the Central Wasatch.

To supplement the literature reviews, Stakeholders interviews were conducted. There were several common themes throughout the interviews, such as:

* The need to balance use and development in the Central Wasatch to protect the ecosystem, the watershed, and the diversity of experiences in the canyons.
* Concern that there was no clear data about how many people visited the Central Wasatch annually, where those visitors were going in the canyons, how they recreated or experienced the canyons, and what impacts those visitors may cause.
* There were misunderstandings about what a Visitor Use Study would do. For instance, that it may be used to establish visitor use numbers for specific settings or specific dates. Alternatively, that a Visitor Use Study may be used as a tool to restrict the number of users to specific sites at specific times.

The Utah State University team compiled all of the existing data. Dr. Smith highlighted the Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring Program. He explained that it was a useful data collection tool to better understand visitor use across the entirety of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache. However, it could not say anything about the impacts of visitor use at a site-specific level. One of the key recommendations from Phase I was to partner with the U.S. Forest Service to supplement their survey work as part of the National Visitor Use Monitoring Program and collect data specific to each canyon within the Central Wasatch.

The next step of the Phase I effort related to a Legislative and policy review. Dr. Smith explained that the team walked through each of the indicators and documented all of the entities (County, State, Federal, and Municipal) that had something to say in a planning document or in legal guidance related to outdoor recreation use within the canyons. He referenced documents from the Forest Service (2003 Revised Forest Plan) and Salt Lake County (Wasatch Canyons General Plan).

The last step of the Phase I work was related to indicator assessment. Outdoor recreation settings within the canyons were categorized according to a variety of different site types. Certain indicators were highlighted as being viable and were broken out across the different recreation setting types:

* Trails:
  + Informal trail proliferation and condition.
  + Trail condition.
  + Trail width; linear extent.
  + Trail condition class; linear extent.
  + Trail depth (incision); linear extent.
* Areas around high elevation lakes:
  + Disturbed shoreline.
* Backcountry campsites:
  + Campsite proliferation; campsite number and location.
  + Campsite area.
  + Campsite condition.
* Water bodies:
  + Water quality.
  + E. coli/coliforms; counting of indicator organisms.
  + Nitrate.
  + Dissolved organic Carbon.
  + Particulate Carbon.
  + Suspended sediment.
  + Total dissolved Nitrogen.
* Access points:
  + Roadside vegetation disturbance.
  + Parking.
  + Developed and roadside parking use.
  + The average time a car was parked.
* Rock climbing areas:
  + Routes that were used.

Dr. Smith discussed Phase II of the Visitor Use Study. The team would begin to collect data on each of the indicators and collect data on visitor use. This would make it easier to understand how visitor use and indicator changes were related. The data collection process had begun for Phase II. Dr. Smith explained that data would be collected in many ways, including trail counters, trail cameras, traffic counters as well as mobile location data. The data would be used to better understand how visitor use impacted the ecological and physical characteristics. Dr. Smith discussed the goals related to Phase II of the Visitor Use Study:

* Quantify the spatial and temporal dynamics of current use.
* Better understand the extent to which outdoor recreation activity within the canyons affects each of the key indicators.
* Where possible, look at the likely changes to ecological and physical resource conditions related to expected use in the future.

Dr. Smith reported that all of the results from Phase I were included in the Visitor Use Study Phase I Report. He was available to answer any CWC Board Member questions. Chair Robinson thanked Dr. Smith for his presentation. He noted that he was asked if anything from the Phase I findings of the Visitor Use Study would be informative to the Utah Department of Transportation ("UDOT") during the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") process. Dr. Smith stated that there was a need for the Visitor Use Study, but he did not believe the data would be able to inform UDOT on anything specific at the current time.

Councilor Bradley felt that the presentation by Dr. Smith had been thorough. Mayor Peterson asked Dr. Smith if there was collaboration with the Forest Service in the study. Dr. Smith explained that one of the key points of collaboration was the collection of additional visitors use data related to the amount of use and the types of use. That would be collected from intercept surveys and at different trailheads throughout the Central Wasatch. It would provide detailed information about use in a format defined by the Forest Service. Additionally, all of the data collection efforts required collaboration with Forest Service Staff to obtain research permits.

Laura Briefer noted that the Phase I findings were written in draft form. She wondered if there was an opportunity to provide comments or feedback on the draft. Dr. Smith explained that the project team envisioned the report as something that would continue to evolve. It could be updated to ensure that it was the most comprehensive report possible. He welcomed any comments.

Mayor Sondak stated that it seemed the social aspect of the Visitor Use Study would move forward. As he understood it, the CWC Board had determined that they would look at the social aspect, but only if other funding were obtained. Dr. Smith explained that the Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring Program began on October 1. As a result, they needed to commit by that date. If the CWC was unable to obtain funding for that portion of the study, the extra work would be dropped and the existing work folded into the National Visitor Use Monitoring Program. CWC Executive Director, Ralph Becker explained that CWC Staff was asked to pursue $30,000 worth of funding from outside sources for the social aspect of the Visitor Use Study. They currently had funds in hand or pledges for funds that totaled approximately $17,000. Staff would continue to pursue other funding sources and bring the item back to the CWC Board in the future.

Chair Robinson thanked Dr. Smith for his work and presentation. He looked forward to hearing more about the Visitor Use Study as the Phase II work continued.

1. **Budget/Finance/Audit Committee: Meeting Took Place on October 20, 2021.**

* **Commissioners will Discuss Adopting an Amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021/2022 Budget.**

Chair Robinson noted that the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee met on October 20, 2021. Mayor Silvestrini did not believe there were any further updates to share related to the meeting.

1. **Stakeholders Council: Meeting Took Place on October 20, 2021, 3:00 p.m.**

Chair Robinson reported that the Stakeholders Council met on October 20, 2021. He explained that the CWC Board would hear from Stakeholders Council leadership during the CWC Board Retreat.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**ACTION ITEMS**

1. **The Board will Consider Resolution 2021-19 Adopting an Amended Budget for the Period of 1 July 2021 through 30 June 2022.**

**MOTION:** Mayor Wilson moved to approve Resolution 2021-19 Adopting an Amended Budget for the Period of 1 July 2021 through 30 June 2022. Councilor Houseman seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

1. **The Board will Consider Resolution 2021-09 Approving Entry into the Third Amendment to an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement with the University of Utah.**

Chair Robinson reported that Resolution 2021-09 was the third amendment to an Interlocal Agreement with the University of Utah on the Environmental Dashboard. The budgetary aspects had been discussed as part of the budget amendment for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

**MOTION:** Mayor Peterson moved to approve Resolution 2021-09 Approving Entry into the Third Amendment to an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement with the University of Utah. Councilor Doilney seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

**CLOSED SESSION BEGINS**

1. **Chair of the Board Christopher F. Robinson will Begin a Closed Session to discuss the Character, Professional Competence, or Physical or Mental Health of an Individual as Authorized by Utah Code Annotated 52-4-205(1)(a).**

Chair Robinson reported that a Closed Session had been planned. Ms. Nielsen discussed how CWC Board Members would move into the new Zoom meeting for the Closed Session.

**MOTION:** Councilor Doilney moved to begin a Closed Session for the purpose of discussing the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual as authorized by Utah Code Annotated 52-4-205(1)(a). Mayor Wilson seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

**CLOSED SESSION ENDS**

1. **Chair of the Board Christopher F. Robinson will End the Closed Session for the Purpose of Discussing the Character, Professional Competence or Physical or Mental Health of an Individual as Authorized by Utah Code Annotated 52-4-205(1)(a) and Reopen the Central Wasatch Commission Board Meeting.**

**MOTION:** \_\_\_\_\_\_ moved to end the Closed Session for the Purpose of Discussing the Character, Professional Competence or Physical or Mental Health of an Individual as Authorized by Utah Code Annotated 52-4-205(1)(a). \_\_\_\_\_ seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

**BOARD MEETING REOPENS**

The CWC Board Meeting reopened.

**ADJOURN BOARD MEETING**

1. **Chair of the Board Christopher F. Robinson will Close the CWC Board Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Mayor Sondak moved to adjourn the CWC Board Meeting. Mayor Wilson seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Board.

The meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Board Meeting held Monday, November 1, 2021.***

**Teri Forbes**

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

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