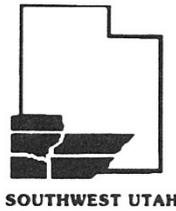


Five County Association of Governments

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MINUTES FIVE COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2022 1:30 P.M.

SOUTHWEST UTAH BEHAVIOR HEALTH BUILDING, BOARD ROOM; 245 E. 680 S.; CEDAR CITY, UTAH (ANCHOR LOCATION). MEETING WAS ALSO PROVIDED VIA A GOTOMEETING VIDEO CONFERENCE.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE IN-PERSON

Commissioner Jerry Taylor, Chair
Commissioner Andy Gant, Vice-Chair
Commissioner Wade Hollingshead
Commissioner Paul Cozzens
Dale Brinkerhoff
Escalante City Mayor Melani Torgersen
Hurricane City Mayor Nanette Billings
Tyler Fails
Stephen Lisonbee (ex-officio, non-voting member)
LaRene Cox

REPRESENTING

Garfield County Commission
Kane County Commission
Beaver County Commission
Iron County Commission
Iron County School Board
Garfield County Mayor's Representative
Washington Co. Mayor's Representative
Beaver County School Board
Southern Utah University
Washington County School Board and
Congressman Chris Stewart (Wash. Co.)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE VIA VIDEO

Ralph Perkins
Henrie Walton (ex-officio, non-voting member)

REPRESENTING

Garfield County School Board
Dixie State University

MEMBERS EXCUSED

Commissioner Gil Almquist
Milford City Mayor Nolan Davis

REPRESENTING

Washington County Commission
Beaver County Mayor's Representative

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE IN-PERSON

Bryan Thiriot
Gary Zabriskie
Alyssa Gamble
Allison McCoy
Cindy Bulloch
Heath Hansen

REPRESENTING

Five County AOG Executive Director
Five County AOG Deputy Director, CTO
Five County AOG Associate Planner
Five County AOG Chief Financial Officer
Congressman Chris Stewart
Senator Mike Lee

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE VIA VIDEO

Brock Jacobsen

REPRESENTING

Santa Clara City

AGENDA ITEMS I. WELCOME BY CHAIR

Garfield County Commissioner Jerry Taylor, as Steering Committee Chair, welcomed everyone to the Five County AOG Steering Committee meeting and acknowledged that there was a quorum, and that Board members Ralph Perkins and Henrie Walton were participating on the video conference. The Chair reminded the members that it is really helpful, when the staff sends out the agenda and packet, to respond whether they can attend the upcoming meeting, either in-person or via a video conference, so that we can have confidence that we will have a quorum.

AGENDA ITEM II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chair then asked Mr. Dale Brinkerhoff to lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ITEM III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 9, 2022 MEETING

The Chair asked if all the members had reviewed the minutes, and asked if there were any corrections needed, and then he called for a motion for approval of the minutes for the previous February 9, 2022, meeting in Kanab.

Mayor Melani Torgerson moved to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Paul Cozzens.

The Chair after asking for any needed discussion, and seeing there was none, called for a vote.

The vote of the members in-person and on the videoconference was unanimous in the affirmative to approve the minutes as presented.

AGENDA ITEM IV. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM

A. ANNUAL ACTION PLAN APPROVAL

The Chair turned the time over to **Ms. Alyssa Gamble**, Associate Planner in the Community and Economic Development Division of the Five County Association of Governments, to cover the three matters in Agenda Item # IV. She explained that the first matter to present is the HUD Annual Action Plan update. She said that the staff has gone through the planning process and a 30-day comment period and public hearing for the regional Annual Action Plan. She said that the executive summary of the final draft of the Plan is included in your packets, and that no changes were made since last month in Kanab when we talked about this. She said that we did not receive any comments through the entire comment period, or at the public hearing.

Ms. Gamble provided a quick recap for anyone who was not at the Kanab Steering Committee meeting back on February 9th. She said that the Annual Action Plan is a requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development block grant (CDBG) program. The federal CDBG program is administered in this state as the Utah Small Cities CDBG program by the Utah Department of Workforce Services Housing and Community Development division. The Annual Action Plan provides for community dialogue to align funding from with local housing and community development needs. She said the Five County AOG is responsible for reporting this region's housing needs, community development

priorities, CDBG project rating and ranking development, regional capital improvements needs, as well as some other special needs.

Ms. Gamble said that the AOG coordinates with a variety of agencies, including continuum of care, local housing authorities, other organizations administered by Five County, local non-profits, and counties and communities in our region, to develop the Plan. She said that the 30-day comment period ended on February 27th and then the staff held a public hearing on the 28th. She said that as she previously mentioned, there were no comments received and thus no changes made to the draft Plan. She said that the next step is approval of the plan by this body, and that she would be happy to answer any questions or comments anyone in attendance might have about the Plan.

The Chair asked if there were any questions, comments, or concerns. He noted that this agenda item required a motion and a vote.

The Chair acknowledged a motion to approve the Five County One-Year Action Plan for the period July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023 that was made by Commissioner Andy Gant. A second to that motion was made by Commissioner Wade Hollingshead. That second to the motion was acknowledged by the Chair.

The Chair asked if there was any further discussion on the motion and seeing none asked for all in favor to say aye. He then asked if there were any opposed votes to say nay.

All voting by those in person and on the videoconference were in the affirmative and the One-Year Action Plan was thus approved.

B. PRESENT RATING AND RANKING EVALUATION COMPLETED BY AOG STAFF

Ms. Gamble told the Board members that she could answer any questions that they might have about the policies and procedures and process for accomplishing the rating and ranking before getting too far into this Agenda item. There were no questions at that point. Ms. Gamble then handed out to the Board a printed document containing the Rating and Ranking results in a prioritized table. She explained that the projects highlighted in green are the final funding recommendations. She said that there are a few pre-approved projects, including the AOG set-aside funding for administration of the program and planning activities that we offer to the region.

Ms. Gamble stated that there is also a set-aside from a multi-year project awarded to the Cedar City Housing Authority last year, then projects 1 through 5 are recommended for funding. She explained that those projects would be Milford City, on behalf of the Beaver Housing Authority, \$90,000; Cedar City, on behalf of the Cedar City Housing Authority, \$175,000; Panguitch City, \$200,000 for a fire truck; Brian Head Town, for a fire department water tender, \$144,000; and finally, Henrieville town, for a playground project receiving partial funding of just over \$158,000.

C. FORMAL RATING AND RANKING APPROVAL

The Chair was informed by Mr. Gary Zabriskie, Deputy Director and Director of Community and Economic Development at the Association, that the Steering Committee, in its official role

as the 'CDBG Regional Review Committee', needs to consider the approval of the Rating and Ranking for FY2022, and whether to approve the funding as recommended in the scoring sheet document provided. He said that this action will require a motion and a vote.

Mr. Zabriskie explained that whoever makes the motion, it should be to accept the results of the rating and ranking process, and to approve the funding based on the scoring that resulted from applying the matrix to the projects and that the projects are funded with the anticipated available funds for the projects in the numerical order of ranking after the pre-approved and set-aside funded projects are funded. It was also explained by Mr. Zabriskie that this means new projects one through four on the list will be fully funded with the fifth project mostly funded. He also stated that projects six through eight will not be able to be funded this program year because of lack of sufficient CDBG dollars to fund all projects.

Commissioner Gant moved that the Steering Committee, acting in its role as the CDBG Regional Review Committee, approve the Rating and Ranking allocations as presented, based on the scoring that resulted from applying the rating matrix to the applications, and that the projects shall be funded with anticipated available funding, in order of their ranking, after the pre-approved and set-aside funded projects are funded. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Hollingshead.

The Chair after asking for any further discussion on the above motion, and seeing none, called for a vote.

The vote of the members, in-person and on the videoconference, on the above motion, was unanimous in the affirmative.

AGENDA ITEM V. BUDGET AMENDMENTS (MID-YEAR BUDGET REVISIONS)

The Chair turned the time over to **Ms. Allison McCoy**, Chief Financial Officer at the Five County Association of Governments, to cover this agenda item. She stated that we have our mid-year budget amendments and some of the highlights with all of the numbers are increases in the aging grants. She said we received additional funding through the year for our aging programs. She went on to say that our HEAT Program, which is the Home Energy Assistance Target program received a new program through the state for water assistance, for help in paying your water bill. She said that meant a budget increase that is through LIHEAP.

Ms. McCoy continued that HEAT also received additional funding in the regular HEAT program for energy assistance. She said that there was a bit of CARES Act money that came in through the state, in the human services programs at the Association, for poverty and homelessness and emergency rental assistance and that was quite an increase in that funding that needed to be spent down quickly. She discussed the VITA program, which is the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, explaining that our Association employee Michael Day has become the state lead on that program, putting him over the entire State VITA program. She said that because of that position, we are receiving additional funding for his role.

Ms. McCoy said that the overall budget increased \$2,073,592 from \$10,629,038 to a new total of \$12,702,630. Mr. Zabriskie explained to the Board that on page 2 of the budget sheets provided, it shows highlighted in green or red whether a program budget increased or

decreased at the mid-year point. He said in the pages following this summary page, the individual program budgets are also shown with similar red and green highlighting showing where the increases and decreases occurred in individual program budgets.

Ms. McCoy asked the Board members if they had any questions about any particular program's budget or anything else regarding the overall budget.

Hurricane City Mayor Nanette Billings asked Ms. McCoy if the three decreases highlighted in red were because of grants that were not received. Ms. McCoy answered that this was not the case. She said it was a matter of that when this year's annual budget was put together in the Spring of 2021, there were amounts that were not exactly known at that earlier time. She gave an example of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) program. She said there was a small decrease in the subcontracts, where they receive deliverables that we used on the SSBG program. She said there were fewer subcontracts. Then she explained, as another example, the QEFAP Emergency Food Assistance program that is used for Hurricane pantry. She said that the money anticipated is not always exactly what they say we were going to get. She did say that we did get a lot of donations for the pantry that have allowed us to keep that important activity going.

Ms. McCoy also explained that during the height of the Covid-19 federal spending, we received four to five million dollars in extra money that just about overwhelmed us, and to be able to spend all of that out as quickly as the federal government, or state agencies administering it wanted, was daunting. She gave as an example the Housing Assistance Program which received around \$1 million to provide emergency rental assistance for anyone affected by Covid. We were in the process of spending this out, and apparently many agencies across the state were not getting it done fast enough, so the state took the remainder back and took over the intake at the state level. She said that what was previously a timeframe of 3 weeks when we were administering it, now is backlogged about two months.

A question was asked as to whether the Association still provides funding for first time home buyers. Mr. Zabriskie explained that we have not had a program like that for many years, and when we did it, was more than 12 years ago and was in very small amounts. He said it was primarily for paying closing costs as a soft second loan that rode along with the primary loan and did not need to be repaid unless the person sold their home and moved. He said the last first-time homebuyer program that he was aware of was a program that the City of St. George funded for home purchasers within their city limits that would pay up to \$6,000 towards the down payment and closing costs of a home for those first-time buyers. He said St. George City contracted with the Association to staff the intake, qualification of applicants, inspect the residence being purchased for basic life/health/safety concerns, and closing the down payment assistance loan. The city then reimbursed the Association for the dollar amount of each assistance loan and paid a negotiated administration fee to the Association for each down payment loan closed.

AGENDA ITEM VI. AREAWIDE CLEARING HOUSE (A-95) REVIEW

The Chair invited **Mr. Gary Zabriskie**, Director of Community and Economic Development, to present an Areawide Clearinghouse review for the Steering Committee's consideration. He explained that the mailed noticed of this proposed project came in the afternoon after he had

mailed out the meeting packet to everyone. He explained that this project, on land in Kane County, leased from SITLA, is to extend a stock water line by about a half a mile to ¾ mile to provide for additional stock watering. He explained that this will also benefit wildlife in the area. Mr. Zabriskie said that he reached out to the Kane County commissioners who reported back to him that the county was supportive of this project.

Mr. Zabriskie stated that affected counties in these project notifications are always free to submit their own comments and concerns directly to the notifying agency. The state has mandated that the association of governments in the state act in a role as an “areawide clearinghouse”. He noted that the Steering Committee traditionally has supported the comments and concern of an affected county when these are presented to the board for its action.

The Chair called for a motion on this agenda item.

Kane County Commissioner Andy Gant moved that the Steering Committee be recorded and reported as being ‘supportive’ of the proposed range improvement project in Kane County, as presented to them in their packet. That motion was seconded by Mr. Dale Brinkerhoff.

The Chair asked for any further discussion on the above motion. Commissioner Gant reiterated to the members of the Steering Committee that this is just a waterline extension to provide more adequate water for livestock. The Chair then called for a vote.

The vote of the members, in-person, and on the videoconference, on the above motion, was unanimous in the affirmative.

AGENDA ITEM VII. NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING PROGRESS

REPORT/UPCOMING COMMENT PERIOD

The Chair turned the time over to Ms. Gamble who explained that AOG staff in the Community and Economic Development division has been putting together a region-wide multi-jurisdictional natural hazard mitigation plan update for the five-county area. She said that staff has been working with emergency managers from each of the five counties and folks from each city and town in the region, and we have also included the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah in the plan. She said that this plan has several key parts, the first being a risk assessment that basically goes through the available data and assesses the different natural hazard risks that are posed in our area. She said that the Plan covers generally eight natural hazards. She said that some communities had asked that we include some additional natural hazards, but nonetheless, the ones that are covered include wildfire, landslide, flood, earthquake, droughts, severe weather, problems soils, and radon.

Ms. Gamble went on to explain that the second part, which she has been working closely with communities on, is developing a list of actions to include in this plan update. She said that those actions are on a future window. She said that at this point the AOG is getting ready to post the draft document for public comments. Ms. Gamble told the board that she just wanted to make sure that the Steering Committee members were aware of the progress of

the plan update. She said that she will send out an e-mail with a link to the draft and said she would love to hear back if anyone had any questions, comments, or concerns about the draft. She told the Board that she would be happy to talk through the planning process if they had any questions.

Mr. Zabriskie asked Ms. Gamble to give the web address where the plan is and information on the update process is found. She explained that the plan is posted at <https://hazardmitigation.org>. She said that she will include web URL link that when she sends out the draft for the Steering Committee members. Mr. Zabriskie stated that this is the fourth go around since the federal government started this type of natural hazard pre-disaster mitigation planning that began back in 2001. He said that the first plan undertaken by the Association was completed in 2007, the first update of that original five-year plan was completed in 2012, and a second update completed in 2017. He said that this makes the present update the third update, so the adopted plan will be the fourth version of it. He said that in each of those five year updates the plan document is significantly amended or changed, mainly because of technology changes, as well as we have new or better data, etc. He said that this current update is essentially a major rewrite.

Mr. Zabriskie said that one of Ms. Gamble's strong points when we elected to hire her in 2020 was that she had just completed her master's degree up in Oregon, and their master's degree project was a natural hazard mitigation plan for a multi-county area up there and was just what we needed here. He said that once Alyssa was onboard, she "jumped right into the wildfire", which is more appropriate to say, as that is one of our region's major natural hazards. Furthermore, he said once the plan is reviewed and approved by the state, it will be sent to FEMA for final approval, then each participating jurisdiction and the Paiute Tribe of Utah can adopt the plan, that will be in place until the next update that starts in 2025 or 2026 with a planned adoption in 2027.

Mr. Zabriskie asked Ms. Gamble to briefly explain to the Board what the point was of having this plan and what are the good things it brings to our counties and communities? Ms. Gamble said that understanding your hazard risks and integrating that information into other projects that the town, city, or county is already doing like re-doing a road, they could consider looking at stormwater infrastructure needs in that area are on that road. She said that participation and adoption of this plan is required if a town, city, or county would like to apply for FEMA pre-disaster mitigation funds. She said we have tried hard to engage all our communities to participate in this planning process and put together actions that they know they would actually like to move forward with, and that would be helpful for their communities. She said that the data for the plan was mainly sourced from local, state, and federal sources. She said that there is the Utah Geologic Survey with geologic hazards data that is invaluable. She also said there has been a portal put together for wildfire risk assessments that the Oregon Department of Forestry manages, with data for western states, and they have a specific risk assessment for Utah. She said that FEMA has floodplain mapping for all our communities, whether on paper or digital maps. She said some of our communities even produce some of their own data. She explained that some of the entities have worked with engineers, and they will provide us that information.

Mr. Zabriskie said that recently Santa Clara City had what is called the Truman Landslide that people in Washington County are familiar with, where the hillside was falling towards historic

Highway 91, now called The Old Dixie Highway, in the area with the historic district with the tall old sycamore trees and fruit stand. He said the hillside to the north was sloughing off there and they lost several homes up on the heights along the edge. He said the City applied to FEMA for funding a project in the previous mitigation plan and that gave them a key to apply for those FEMA grant funds. He said the FEMA funding is matched with local funding, usually 75% federal grant and 35% local funding participation. He also said that the Town of Apple Valley has flooding problems and have done the same thing, after they put the project in the plan. He said a large part of this is identifying where the hazards are and that helps entities as they do their general plans to identify appropriate areas in town for development. He said it allows them the ability to determine where subdivisions go and whether the proposal is in a hazard area that they can avoid. He said that the best thing to do on mitigation is when you can avoid. He said that the next best thing is to put it in the mitigation plan, saying, we need to do something to try to either fix this or minimize the risk from it, and, as mentioned that gives the entity a key to going to the federal FEMA dollars that they announce about twice a year or so.

Ms. Gamble explained that the plan is a non-regulatory plan so that by adopting it, an entity is not really held to the projects that are in it. She said it is more about integrating those projects into the entity's existing codes and ordinances, local policies, and other plans and programs in that entity. She said that is what will make the hazard mitigation plan most effective. She said that it does require additional steps from the community to see something from the product at the end of it. She finished by saying that the best part of pre-disaster mitigation planning is it gets the jurisdiction thinking about the vulnerabilities in their community and they are then able to act ahead of time to reduce those vulnerabilities so that there is not a disaster, or it lessens the intensity of potential damage to something less than a disaster.

AGENDA ITEM VIII. COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

The Chair recognized **Mr. Nate Wiberg**, Senior Planner at the Five County Association of Governments, who said he was there because it is time to update, or rewrite, the Five County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Mr. Wiberg explained that it is more commonly known as the CEDS (pronounced "sai-ds") and told the Steering Committee members that if you hear us using some of that jargon it is a regional economic development plan. He stated that Five County is considered an EDA recognized Economic Development District or EDD, designated as such in 1980. He said that like an AOG the EDD is a multi-jurisdictional entity that is usually made up of multiple counties in Utah, in fact all the associations of governments in Utah are recognized as EDDs from the EDA. Mr. Wiberg explained that the Five County EDD has helped to lead a locally-based, regionally-driven, economic development planning process and leverages the involvement of the public as well as private and nonprofit sectors to establish a strategic blueprint, or economic development roadmap for regional collaboration.

Mr. Wiberg said that this means that an EDD, in our case the Five County AOG, has a main purpose, and that is to develop a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy which allows municipalities in the region to apply for EDA funding. He said that it is a big part of what the Association is as a regional Economic Development District, and the CEDS is a key part as a guiding document when your counties or local jurisdiction are working on larger

regionally-based economic development projects. He stated that Mr. Zabriskie had told him earlier that the Walmart Distribution Center in Hurricane City included EDA funding for the infrastructure going into that development, as well as an EDA grant here in Cedar City to put in a connecting taxiway across the road from a jet aircraft manufacturer to the Cedar City airport runway.

Mr. Wiberg stated that down at Dixie State University, a portion of Innovation Plaza was funded by the EDA. He said that the CEDS is dealing with regionally significant economic development projects, so we are not going to be involved if you are getting a Wendy's, or something similar, but is intended for much bigger projects. He explained that the CEDS is a planning process, and document, that creates the space where the region can identify strengths, and weaknesses, and bring together a diverse set of partners to generate good jobs, diversify the economy, and spur economic growth. According to the guidelines for developing the CEDS, he added that this process should engage a range of partners including the EDD, community leaders, residents, Indian tribes, the private sector, educational institutions, and other stakeholders in our region. He said that an effective CEDS allows the region to maximize its economic development potential as well as engage with the U.S. Economic Development Administration and other federal partners.

Mr. Wiberg said that the funding that most communities generally access is EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs, so we plan on holding a "how to apply" workshop with the EDA to invite all our economic development officials and staff to come learn how to apply for those grants. He said that the Association hopes to do that annually, or as needed. Mr. Wiberg explained that a requirement of the federal designation as an EDD is that the regional CEDS must be updated at least every five years, and an effective CEDS planning process identifies locally grown strategies that will guide regional economic development, encourage partnerships and collaboration, improve economic outcomes, and overall quality of life. He said that to create a more meaningful CEDS this time around, we are working with all of you and your staff early in the process so we can get it to be more related to what is going on in our communities. He explained that those involved includes the Five County AOG Steering Committee, which is considered the governing board for the CEDS, as well as a required strategy committee which is made up of public and private sector representatives. He said that many of the people on that committee are the county economic development staff in our five counties.

Mr. Wiberg explained what a CEDS looks like. He said that there are plan requirements set by the EDA called content guidelines that defines things we must have in there, including a lot of data. He explained that the EDA has come a long way in the last 15 years, and they are trying to get the EDDs to work more with our communities, so it represents more of what is happening on the ground and what our priorities are here regionally. He said it can look like anything, such as a 200-page white paper if that is what this group feels like that is the way you want to go, or it can be an online digital dashboard where we can just pull up the data and other parts of the strategy document. Mr. Wiberg showed what our current one looks like, more of the white paper style, with charts, graphs, and data along with goals and other things like that. He stated that it is a big document, but it has been a very useful document. He said that Mr. Danny Stewart says he uses it all the time when he is working on projects, especially his bigger projects like the mine, and others like that.

Mr. Wiberg was asked to give an example on how a community can use this. He said that there is a lot of data in the CEDS so when your community is working on an economic development project, a lot of times the funding agencies want to see how you are planning for that economic development. He said that in that circumstance, you can open the CEDS and say this is how the regional EDD sees this as a priority and goal in our region. He said that it is going to help you further that process. The Chair thanked Mr. Wiberg for his presentation.

AGENDA ITEM IX. OPEN TIME REPORT ON THE UTAH LEGISLATURE 2022 GENERAL SESSION

There were no state legislators in attendance to report on the recently ended session. They will be invited to participate in a future Steering Committee meeting.

AGENDA ITEM X. OPEN TIME DISCUSSION OF STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTION

The Chair invited the Board members to discuss any state legislation passed or not passed in the 2022 General Session and what that legislation's potential impact may have on communities and counties, especially in rural Utah. No current legislators were present to report on the recent session. Mr. Zabriskie said that at a future meeting, either in person, or via GoToMeeting, we will invite those legislators to give a 10- or 15-minute report on things that were involved in there at the legislature this year. **Mr. Stephen Lisonbee**, representing Southern Utah University, said that it was exciting to report that we got \$20 million for Commissioner Jerry Taylor's Dinosaur Museum project in Escalante, \$10 million for rural water, and a \$20,000 annual raise for every rural schoolteacher. Then he broke the news that, of course, he was simply joking about those, but had just wanted to make sure he had everyone's undivided attention.

Commissioner Taylor, as Chair, commented that he had known that Mr. Lisonbee was good, but didn't know he was "that" good. After all joking was put aside, Mr. Lisonbee stated that there actually was \$92 million in legislative appropriations, not related to education, directed specifically to rural Utah. He said that \$3 million was appropriated towards rural electric vehicle charging infrastructure, which funding was attempted for last year; 50%-50% match for a co-ops approach; \$1 million toward a food security pilot program that the Utah Department of Agriculture will run; \$1.25 million for a grazing improvement program; \$500,000 towards the Hatch Town dam study; expansion of the Bear Lake Marina; and \$2 million for the San Rafael Energy Research Center improvements. He went on to explain that \$21.3 million was provided for the "Rural Opportunity Fund" that is brand-new. He said it is a rural block grant for \$200,000 for rural counties, and this Association, and all the counties except Washington County get it. He said that they really can use that for whatever they want, and while there are some expectations, there is a local governing board to plan together about what intended uses would be, and then they would have twelve months to put into action. He said it is used for all sorts of things, such as right here in Iron County who put in a chunk of funding to help build out a good plan for the satellite Inland Port, the Port 15 expansion, and what that would look like. He also said we have seen some of it go towards kinds of innovation centers in smaller communities. He said it can be used to do broadband internet studies. He said that you could do a wide range of things really at the discretion of the county. He said that continues to get funded, and we call that "Part A", and the "Part B" is considered the block grant approach.

Mr. Lisonbee said that Part B is a grant program where you can get up to \$600,000 and those are more project-based. He said that he can think of one right here in Cedar City, as an example, is the Downtown Alliance putting together a project where they have got some match partnerships going on, where they are trying to get rid of all the power lines that are sitting fifty feet behind all those businesses downtown and there are just a lot of problems with it. He explained that they have a project where, if they could get \$300,000 in this grant, they could almost triple it with all the other partners, so that is a project that was funded one-time. He said that they have approved almost a dozen projects two months ago, from what is called Part B. He said that they have increased the amount available in Part B and it is now up to \$10 million a year, and that is ongoing. He said we have only done that for one year.

Mr. Lisonbee then brought up Part C, which is the “Rural Opportunity Fund”, explaining that it is not a grant, but is a revolving loan, with low-interest similar to, and comparable with, the CIB to some degree. He said it provides another access point for funds. He said that what is interesting is that Part B and Part C are both put in Utah Code with a change that makes it designed for counties of the third to sixth class, but municipalities in the second-class counties can access these funds if their municipality is less than 10,000 population. He said that \$21.3 million was appropriated for Part C. He stated that for rural Utah this was all a big win in the legislative session. He briefly explained what the Rural Leadership Academy was and said they are in section 2 of 3, and they are almost done with section 2, and that it has been a great growing experience to kind of refine this program and figure out what value it can bring. He said it was specifically designed to help the rural audience. He finished by mentioning the “One Utah Summit” saying that they have one happening in May in Salt Lake City that is going to be a great event and he said they would love to have everyone there on May 10th. He also said that the one for the fall is scheduled for October 11th-13th.

AGENDA ITEM XI. CONGRESSIONAL STAFF UPDATES

The Chair turned the time over to **Mr. Heath Hansen**, representing U.S. Senator Mike Lee, who stated that it was good to be back with the Steering Committee. He said that last month at various occasions throughout the meeting there was much talk about housing. He said that the federal government, rightly so, does not have a whole lot of influence over housing. He stated that in the past, the Obama Administration tried to implement the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule to attempt to increase the supply of housing. He said that basically would have represented a complete federal takeover of local planning and zoning. He stated that Senator Lee does not agree with that approach to increase the supply of housing. He said that for the past few years, the Senator has been looking for some ways that the federal government may be able to assist with supply of housing.

Mr. Hansen said that out here in the west, we obviously have a lot of federal public land, and in southern Utah especially. He said that Senator Lee is looking at putting together a bill that would, in a manner like the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP), where state and/or local governments petition the BLM for federal land to do recreational and public purposes on those lands. He said that that Act does not allow housing as one of the uses of federal public lands, so Senator Lee is looking to develop a similar pathway where state and/or local governments could petition the BLM to use certain BLM lands for housing purposes. He said that this would not include national monuments, national parks or park service lands, or

wilderness areas. He said it would just be run-of-the-mill BLM land that likely would be close to your community, and provide an opportunity for States and local governments, if they see fit, or if there is land available to petition the federal government for that land to use it for housing purposes. He said that the Senator has not introduced a bill yet, primarily because they are still in the early stages of wanting to get feedback from state and local entities on how this would work. He said that there is a one-pager document that their staff has made up and said if anyone is interested in seeing the concept that Senator Lee wants to implement, he will e-mail you the one-pager, and wants your feedback at this point on how this may work. He said that they have put together draft legislative language on paper, however, it is not ready to be introduced yet, but it is something that Senator Lee wants to prioritize. He said that the Senator is trying to help any way he can with the housing crunch here in Utah.

Mr. Hansen said to get with him via e-mail, or give him a call, if you would like more information. He said he will get what materials they do have at this point. He said that the federal government is going to run out of money by Friday unless Congress acts either through another continuing resolution (CR) or omnibus bill. He said that there was supposed to be an agreed-upon omnibus bill, a little after midnight this morning, that the House is expected to pass today. He said it is almost a three-thousand-page bill. He said that they will probably just pass another CR before Friday to kick the can down the road another week or two weeks until the overlords in Senate leadership and House leadership come to an agreement, so that the rest of the members will have to vote on it, or shut the government down.

Mr. Hansen spoke about the Covid vaccine mandate for private businesses, which has mostly been stalled in the courts, but it is still in place for federal employees and for the military. He said that the Senator continues to hear from military members and their families, and from federal employees, that this vaccine mandate has caused them, or may force them to leave the military, or they are going to have to leave their jobs in federal service. He said that Senator Lee is going to continue to push for every member of Congress to go on record, and for every member of the Senate, to go on record, on where they stand on the vaccine mandates.

Mr. Hansen said that Senator Lee is the vice-chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, and he put out a report last week that highlighted what many already knew, which is inflation is increasing nationwide at a seven and a half percent clip, relative to last year where we were then. He said that here in the Intermountain West, we are facing an even higher inflation rate, of about 9%. He said that if you put that in real terms, it means that the average family in Utah, and the Intermountain West, is spending about \$511 more, per month, on energy, housing, transportation, and food than they were at this time last year.

Mr. Hansen said that Senator Lee is a long-time proponent of a balanced budget amendment to rein in federal spending. He said the Senator says that is really what is driving the inflation at this point, with the unprecedented spending that the federal government is engaged in recently. He said the Senator recognizes the balanced budget amendment is a long-term goal, but he is looking for shorter-term solutions to try to bring federal spending under control. He said the Senator introduced last week a bill called the "Prices Act", and what that would do is it would create a rule within the Senate that would tell the Senate that it could not consider legislation that increased spending if, over the prior year, inflation increased by more than three percent. He said that to waive that rule, it would require a three-fifths majority vote in

the Senate to consider legislation. Mr. Hansen said that the Senator knows that this is obviously not a silver bullet and that it is not going to solve everything, but it would at least make it more difficult for the Senate to continue its runaway spending. He said that Senator Lee introduced that amendment during the last CR, introducing that bill as an amendment, and all Republicans present voted for it, which indicates that we can get a good outcome after November when we retake the Senate.

Mr. Hansen finished his update by bringing everyone's attention to the recent passing of Keith Ringtrup. He said that Mr. Ringtrup was field office manager for the St. George BLM field office when he passed away. He said that Keith was wonderful to work with, and was a great human being, and that the Senator's office had a lot of projects going on with him. He said that the Senator's office has been in touch with the district office of BLM, and they have an acting director in place.

The Chair thanked Mr. Hansen for his report and turned the floor over to Cindy Bulloch, with Congressman Chris Stewart's field office.

Ms. Cindy Bulloch, Southwest Utah Regional Representative for Congressman Chris Stewart, reported that Congressman Stewart spent time recently in Washington County and had a really good town hall event that LaRene Cox helped arrange. She said that the Congressman will be in Cedar City on March 22nd where there will be a town hall that evening, and everyone is invited. She said that Congressman Stewart has been busy with Ukraine with his committee assignments, and his staff has worked on a couple of other issues with some of our region's grazers, trying to help with some grazing issues and had a meeting with the Farm Bureau in Salt Lake.

Ms. LaRene Cox, representing Congressman Stewart in Washington County, said that Congressman Stewart did spend a couple of great days in St George and got to do town halls and it was great. She said that the Congressman said he is anxious to come back and visit with Iron County. Ms. Cox said that the Congressman is on the House Appropriations Committee, so he does have a bit of say in where the money goes.

AGENDA ITEM XII. STATE AGENCY UPDATES

The Chair recognized **Mr. David Busk**, Utah Department of Workforce Services, who reported on what the labor market looks like. He gave a quick snapshot of the two-year change in non-farm jobs in each of the five counties. He said that Beaver County was up 1.7%; Garfield County down 0.3%; Iron County up 6.9%; Kane County up 3.6%; and Washington County up 8.8%; compared to the state as a whole, which is up 3.4% job growth. He then gave a quick overview for each county's unemployment rates, saying that they are all hovering around two or two and a half percent unemployment rate except for Garfield County. He gave the rates as Beaver County at 2.0%; Garfield County at 4.6%; Iron County at 1.9%; Kane County at 1.8%; and Washington County at 1.8%; and that is compared to the state average of 1.9%. He said that the problem in Garfield County is that it is anchored to one industry, tourism. He discussed the "Rural Online Initiative" that is through the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity, where they are working to find employers on the Wasatch Front that they can encourage to look at what positions they have that can be done remotely, and then advertise those positions by using a hashtag RuralJobs (#RuralJobs). He said that they have only got

about 30 employers that have done that so far, but those 30 employers have actually filled nearly 400 jobs with rural Utahans, so that is a pretty significant accomplishment when you think about what that does to our local economies. He said that most of our counties have around a 75% work force participation rate, which means 25% of their population of people between ages of 20 and 60 are not working, nor are they looking for work. He said that they are not on unemployment. He said that this could be for several different reasons. Mr. Busk rhetorically asked “What can we do to bring those folks off the sidelines and entice them back into the workforce, and maybe help this type of economy?” He said that he thinks that some of those things include that perhaps we are going to have to work on creating some private/public partnerships to bring those folks back in off the sidelines.

The Chair thanked Mr. Busk for his update from DWS.

AGENDA ITEM XIII. UNIVERSITY UPDATES

The Chair recognized **Mr. Henrie Walton**, representing Dixie State University, who was appearing via GoToMeeting. Mr. Walton thanked the Steering Committee and its staff for enabling him to be able to appear virtually. He said they have a five-year planning cycle at Dixie State University, and they began their latest strategic planning process about a year and a half ago. He said that one of the goals that he wanted to highlight is called “Community as University” where the idea is to ensure that they have a learning environment for students that is not just combined solely on campus. He said they want their students out in the Five County region, particularly in Washington County, learning from businesses and professionals. He said that this is a mutually beneficial relationship because the University and its students get real work experience out of it, and the community gets a skilled labor workforce.

Mr. Walton said a great example of this is the “City Alliance” program. He said the University is moving into their third year of implementation of this program, but the City Alliance Program is a partnership with individual cities in their service region. He said it is a three-year process, so the University identifies a city to partner with, does a year of planning, then a year of implementation of projects, and then a year of reporting on those projects. He said that they are just about to begin the reporting phase with St. George City, so they have already been through a planning, and an implementation year, and they are about to begin the implementation phase with Santa Clara City. He said that the idea with this program is that municipalities in their service region identify projects, and research anything that they may be in need of, basically anything that the University can help them with. He said that the University’s students, faculty, staff, and administration then work on those projects throughout the year, in consultation with the city to meet their needs. He said, as an example, in partnering with Santa Clara City this upcoming year they are going to be working on economic development, doing small business training workshops, audits, surveys, and a variety of different things. He mentioned that the Santa Clara River has flooded several times in recent years, so they are going to do some flood mitigation and blue clay modeling, which is another problem in southern Utah; and working on public safety issues related to collecting and modeling crime data. He said that what cities sometimes lack is manpower. He said that the University has plenty of experts in a variety of different fields, and their goal in their Strategic Plan Goal 4: “Communities as University” is to ensure they are using the resources of the University to serve the community, while at the same time giving their students real

world experiences. He said they are working with Santa Clara this year, and next year they will be bringing on the town of Springdale. He said that he just wanted to make the Steering Committee all aware of the City Alliance program, especially those of you who hail from Washington and Kane counties, because they would like to partner with those county's municipalities in the coming years.

Mr. Walton paused to see if there were any questions related to that program. Hurricane City Mayor Nanette Billings asked how they determine what communities to work with? Mr. Walton stated that each fall, they have an application period, and they meet with and take applications for many municipalities in our service region. He said last year they did something a little bit unique where they had two great proposals, one from Santa Clara City and one from the town of Springdale. He said that they are going to be starting with Springdale this fall, which means the next application period will be a little over a year away, but they are always open to having conversations earlier on. Mayor Billings asked Mr. Walton to give an example of one of the projects that they are working on. He explained that, like he had said, that the Santa Clara River has flooded twice in the last 20 years, with 200-Year floods, they will be working on a bunch of flood modeling with the University's mathematics, statistics, and geospatial professors to help them related to the Santa Clara River. He said they are also working on different sorts of environmental studies relating to the Santa Clara River. He said they are modeling blue clay soils in Santa Clara. He said they are partnering with the public safety office in Santa Clara on modeling and capturing crime data, and then also doing a variety of different small business workshops for the Santa Clara City main drag that has a lot of small mom-and-pop shop types of businesses. He said that those are just some examples that they are doing with one particular city. He said that what they are trying to do is ensure that the city they are partnering with is the one who was identifying and driving those projects. He said that the University is there to meet the community's needs in this program, not the other way around.

Mr. Walton then shared some of our legislative wins in this legislative session. He referenced Mr. Stephen Lisonbee's presentation earlier in the meeting, about a lot of great things happening in rural Utah. He said that he would speak more specifically to the Dixie State University. He said that they had a great year at the legislative session as did SUU. DSU and SUU were both funded for new capital development projects. A general classroom building will be built on the DSU campus, and it is a \$56 million building. He explained that DSU is one of the only campuses in the state that does not have a workhorse type of a building that functions as a general classroom building, so they are really excited about that. He said that they hope to start construction on that in the next year to year and a half and that building will centralize the University's academic corridor and bring students back home to our main campus for general education courses. He said that they also received funding through the Utah Department of Natural Resources to build out the "Parks Pass" program which is a partnership between Dixie State University and the DNR, where folks can buy a digital web app pass to Utah's state parks so that instead of waiting in a long line, as you enter you can just pull out your phone and swipe your ID and jump right to the front of the line.

Mr. Walton wrapped up his update by discussing statewide initiatives. He said Dixie State, as a polytechnic institution, is trying to meet the workforce needs of our region and they are really excited about two initiatives, one being the "Healthcare Workforce Initiative" and the other one the "Engineering Initiative". He said that they were funded to the tune of \$2 million

and \$5 million respectively and what they will do is allow the university to expand programs in nursing and a variety of healthcare fields, and then in engineering and computer science. He said that what they are trying to do at Dixie State University is trying to identify where the needs are in our region economically. He said that they are trying to have less degrees to nowhere and help to ensure that they are building programs that meet the community's needs. He said they believe the Healthcare Workforce Initiative and Engineering Initiative will be a great step in that direction and they are really excited about that. He said that he will be looking forward to hearing from our legislators when they are able to present at the Steering Committee. Mr. Walton thanked the Board for letting him appear virtually and apologized that he could not be there in person.

The Chair thanked Mr. Walton for his University update.

AGENDA ITEM XIV. LOCAL AFFAIRS DISCUSSION

The Chair asked if there were any other items of local affairs that anyone wanted to discuss. Seeing that there were none, he moved on to the final agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM XV. ADJOURNMENT

The Chair again thanked all for attending the meeting and seeing that there was no further business to discuss or act upon, and using his non-debatable prerogative, adjourned the meeting at 3:25 p.m.

These minutes were transcribed and typed by Mr. Gary Zabriskie, Deputy Director at the Five County Association of Governments.