

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL MILLCREEK CANYON COMMITTEE MEETING ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2023, AT 4:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICES, LOCATED AT GATEWAY AT 41 NORTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE 102, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.**

**Present:** Tom Diegel, Chair

 Paul Diegel

 Ed Marshall

 Mike Christensen

 Del Draper

 John Knoblock

 Patrick Shea

 William McCarvill

 Rusty Vetter

 Polly Hart

**Staff:**  Blake Perez, Executive Director of Administration

 Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director of Policy

**Opening**

1. **Chair Tom Diegel will Open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Millcreek Canyon Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

Chair Tom Diegel called the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the November 21, 2022, Meeting.**

Chair Diegel reported that the last Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting took place in November 2022. There was a good discussion at that time with Catherine Kanter. Since then, there had not been a lot of new news related to Millcreek. Executive Director of Policy, Lindsey Nielsen reported that all meeting minutes were posted to the Utah Public Notice website for review.

**MOTION:** Ed Marshall moved to APPROVE the November 21, 2022, Millcreek Canyon Committee Minutes. Paul Diegel seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

**FLAP Grant Discussion**

1. **Members of the Millcreek Canyon Committee and the Commission will Discuss the Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) Grant.**

Chair Diegel reported that the Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) public comments were received through a Government Records and Management Act (“GRAMA”) request. The comments were in raw form but he reviewed them along with Paul Diegel. Mr. Diegel summarized the comments. The intention was to discuss the comments and the findings. In addition, there could be discussions about whether the comments reflect the general viewpoints of the Committee. Chair Diegel did not necessarily believe the Committee needed to reach a consensus about the FLAP grant proposal because the Committee Members would have differing opinions. That being said, the Committee Members represent a fair number of constituents through their respective roles in the community. He wanted to see if the general view of the Committee was representative of the viewpoints shared in the FLAP grant public comments.

Chair Diegel informed those present that the next Open House, which will likely be related to a 50% design, will take place in April 2023. He asked that the Committee Members share comments about the FLAP grant public comments and discuss what needs to be done ahead of the Open House. It was noted that 168 comments were received. Chair Diegel was impressed that there was so much passion related to the FLAP grant. Based on the comments, there was not a desire to change the upper canyon significantly. Respondents were enthusiastic about bicycle safety and felt there should be consideration for bicycles, however, other commenters did not want to see a lot of change. He understood that people were resistant to change in general but the comments indicated that there was a desire to maintain the existing feel of the upper canyon.

Chair Diegel believed the overarching goal of the FLAP grant project was to straighten the road and make it wider. He did not see a lot of support for that in the public comments. Mr. Diegel agreed with that conclusion based on the comments received. Something that stood out to him was the desire to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and access. John Knoblock noted that if there was a 24-foot design, there would essentially be the same lane widths that currently exist with the addition of a four-foot bicycle lane. Putting in the four-foot bicycle lane and cutting back the brush a bit on the edges would be more than adequate. The road does not necessarily need to be straightened. The 24-foot design would meet the goals of most of the public comments that were received.

Mr. Diegel agreed with the comments shared by Mr. Knoblock. He also felt it was important to remember that the public comments were based on previous FLAP grant project design elements. At that time, the Committee was told that there would be 11-foot lanes and no bicycle lane. Chair Diegel confirmed that the comments were made in May 2022. During later conversations, it was clear that the FLAP grant consultants listened to a lot of public feedback.

Ed Marshall noted that at the last Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting, Mike Christensen offered to take another look at the advisory approach. He wondered if that had been done. Mr. Christensen explained that there had been some emails related to that. He felt that if safety was the primary concern, it would be wise to implement a bicycle advisory lane. Mr. Diegel believed there was fairly widespread support for that approach. There were several examples where that had been implemented successfully. However, no examples were shared where there was a winding mountain road. Advisory bicycle lanes had yet to be demonstrated on a road similar to what is in Millcreek. Mr. Knoblock noted that the guidelines for implementation stated that advisory bicycle lanes were not recommended on steep grades or curved roads with limited sight lines. Both were true in the upper canyon, so he did not think this approach made sense.

Mr. Marshall was surprised that at the last meeting, there was not a lot of support for the four-foot uphill bicycle lane. That was the reason he thought more about the advisory bicycle lane approach. He could support that approach because it would preserve the character of the canyon, keep the road width narrower, and create bicycle safety. In addition, it should slow down traffic. There were some real advantages to that approach even on a winding mountain road. Del Draper asked about the width of the advisory bicycle lane format. Mr. Marshall reported that the width discussed last time was a 10-foot lane with two five-foot advisory bicycle and pedestrian lanes on either side. Vehicles would need to drive up the center until they need to move over and have an open spot to do so. The idea was that this would slow down vehicles along that stretch of road.

Chair Diegel explained that he reread the emails from Mr. Christensen. He recommended the advisory bicycle lanes as well. There were discussions about speed bumps but Mr. Christensen did not think those were all that helpful because speeds increase between the speed bumps. He did not feel those would be effective traffic mitigators. Mr. Christensen clarified that to slow down vehicles for something specific like a crosswalk, speed bumps could be helpful. However, they are not helpful when the overall goal is to reduce speeds on the lanes. Mr. Diegel noted that the Federal Highway Administration (“FHWA”) agreed and did not think much of the speed bump option. As someone who cycles in Millcreek, he liked the idea of either the four-foot dedicated bicycle lane or the advisory bicycle lanes. He thought the latter would work well.

Patrick Shea reported that in Shenandoah National Park there was once a speeding problem. As a result, traffic cameras were installed to photograph the license plates of the speeders. The fines were substantial. He wondered if it would be possible to do something similar in Millcreek. This enforcement mechanism would deter speeding in the area. Mr. Knoblock believed the issue there relates to the Utah Legislature. He was not certain it was currently legal in Utah. Mr. Christensen confirmed that it is not legal in the State.

Mr. Shea noted that he had been involved in the Mountain Accord process and the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council. He pointed out that there was separate management for the three main canyons, even though it is one ecosystem. He wanted to understand why there was so much division. Mr. Knoblock clarified that Millcreek is a County Road while Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons are State roads. As a result, they are managed by different agencies. Chair Diegel believed the U.S. Forest Service should be the overarching authority. He understood the frustrations expressed by Mr. Shea.

Mr. Draper wondered if there would be additional clarity provided during the April 2023 FLAP Grant Open House. For instance, if a decision had been made about the four-foot bicycle lane or the advisory bicycle lanes. Chair Diegel believed the next phase would be related to the 50% design. He hoped those involved had heard enough through the public comment period and from the Millcreek Canyon Committee to implement certain preferences. Mr. Draper believed at a 50% design level, there would need to be some decisions about the bicycle lanes and road width.

Rusty Vetter wondered if it would be possible to reach out to Ms. Kanter or Helen Peters to have additional discussions. Chair Diegel reported that he exchanged some emails with Ms. Kanter a few weeks earlier. He informed her of the scheduled Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting. She was unable to attend as she was still focused on other work. As a result, she would participate in the March 2023 meeting instead. There would be an opportunity to speak with her about the FLAP grant process at that time. Mr. Vetter hoped it would be possible to have a broader discussion about canyon management at some point. There was discussion about operations and responsibilities. Chair Diegel noted that it was difficult to know if the consultants and others were listening to Committee and public concerns.

Mr. Knoblock reported that public comments were supposed to provide new information or present other perspectives and alternatives. If those in charge decide to ignore what was suggested and shared, that was the nature of the process. That being said, he hoped the consultants would consider the comments. Mr. Diegel was not certain whether the consultants on the project were interested in outside opinions or if the intention was simply to find out if something was missing. Chair Diegel pointed out that initially, Beke Hotze from the Forest Service stated that there would be a categorical exclusion, but had since walked that back. There would not be a categorical exclusion but no formal Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”) process had taken place either. Public comments are not currently a requirement. Mr. Knoblock was not certain that was entirely correct. In between a categorical exclusion and an EIS, there is an Environmental Assessment. That was the category this work had fallen into. Some certain protocols and processes needed to be followed for an Environmental Assessment.

Mr. Shea discussed Environmental Assessments. He noted that an EIS is very detailed and expensive, so there had been a push for there to be an Environmental Assessment instead. In this instance, there could not be a categorical exclusion. An Environmental Assessment was a way to receive input from the public but that public input did not necessarily need to be taken into account. He felt an EIS would be better suited to the Millcreek FLAP grant. Mr. Vetter referenced a previous Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting discussion where it was announced that there would be a more robust environmental review than originally planned. He took that to mean that a categorical exclusion would not occur. Chair Diegel felt it would be worthwhile to find out what the actual process was. For instance, whether or not there would be an Environmental Assessment. He offered to reach out and obtain additional information about the process itself.

Mr. Diegel wondered if there were any other observations related to the public comments received through the GRAMA request. There were no additional observations shared. Chair Diegel asked all members of the Millcreek Canyon Committee to read through the comments.

Chair Diegel reported that the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance installed trailhead counters at winter trailheads in the tri-canyon area over the last three or four years. The Forest Service used them in the summer at the summer trailheads. All of the statistics from December through April at the Millcreek Road and Porter Fork Trailheads were available. Last year, the Terraces Trailhead was counted as well. The Millcreek Road numbers had been consistent, even throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It was approximately twice what the Porter Fork use was. That being said, the Porter Fork Trailhead use increased by approximately 50% over the last few years. Chair Diegel made some graphs with the collected data. He did not know how many parking spots there were in the area but in terms of transportation land management in the winter, it was beneficial to know the actual use numbers.

Chair Diegel believed users were being pushed out of Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons due to traffic issues. As a result, more winter use was taking place in Millcreek Canyon. He felt that traffic levels during the winter months were unsustainable. As a result, it was important to focus on transportation alternatives and limiting personal vehicle use. It was noted that the road itself is not the issue but parking in the canyon. Chair Diegel confirmed that there are no traffic jams like there are in the other canyons, but parking is challenging.

There was discussion regarding the CWC Transportation Committee. Chair Diegel noted that Mayor Dan Knopp serves as Chair of the Transportation Committee. He understood that Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, and Millcreek Canyons were all part of one integrated system. There need to be systems in place for all of the canyons rather than short-term spot solutions.

Mr. Knoblock noted that as part of the FLAP grant project, the upper portion of the canyon will be done first and the second portion of the canyon done in the future. After it is done, it might be possible for Millcreek Canyon to have a shuttle bus in place. Chair Diegel reported that the consultants want to make sure the revisions to the road will allow for a potential shuttle. He felt it was important for the Committee to continue to advocate for a shuttle.

Polly Hart believed the Millcreek Canyon Committee was created to address transportation problems in the canyon rather than advocate for a shuttle. Ms. Nielsen reported that the Committee was originally called the Millcreek Canyon Shuttle Committee. It was specifically created to explore the feasibility of a shuttle in Millcreek Canyon. The scope had broadened over time. Mr. Knoblock added that the mission of the CWC is to implement the Mountain Accord. One of the intended actions in the Mountain Accord was for there to be a trial shuttle bus in Millcreek Canyon. Mr. Diegel explained that part of the reason the Committee was renamed was because there was a desire to provide value to the organization. It was collectively determined that the Committee would be a resource to the CWC by addressing various issues related to Millcreek Canyon. This ensured that Millcreek Canyon received adequate attention and focus.

Mr. Marshall clarified information related to speed bumps. The engineers associated with the FLAP grant project were opposed to the speed bumps not because they were ineffective but because they felt the speed bumps would be unsafe for bicyclists. There was further discussion regarding speed bumps and where it might be reasonable to suggest they be included.

**Other Business and Updates Relating to Millcreek Canyon.**

There were no additional discussions.

**Adjourn.**

1. **Chair Tom Diegel will Close the Public Meeting as Chair of the Millcreek Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

**MOTION:** Patrick Shea moved to ADJOURN the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting. Paul Diegel seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:58 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Stakeholders Council Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting held Tuesday, February 21, 2023.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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