

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL MILLCREEK CANYON COMMITTEE MEETING ON MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2023, AT 1:30 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

 Del Draper

 Paul Diegel

 John Knoblock

 Mike Christensen

 Ed Marshall

 William McCarvill

 Barbara Cameron

 Patrick Shea

 Maura Hahnenberger

 Patrick Nelson

**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 1:30 p.m.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the February 21, 2023, Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Ed Marshall moved to APPROVE the February 21, 2023, Millcreek Canyon Committee Minutes. Paul Diegel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**FLAP Grant Discussion**

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

Chair Diegel shared related to the Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) grant process. He explained that he wanted to speak to the Salt Lake County Deputy Mayor of Regional Operations, Catherine Kanter. Some messages were exchanged but personal issues had kept her from work lately. As a result, she had not been able to interact much with the Millcreek Canyon Committee. She referred him to the Office of Regional Development Director, Dina Blaes. Chair Diegel had since exchanged some emails with Ms. Blaes.

Chair Diegel wanted to discuss with either Mses. Kanter or Blaes about the work done by the Millcreek Canyon Committee as well as the summary of the FLAP grant comments. In addition, he wanted to know if they recognized the issues some people had with the direction of the FLAP grant. Unfortunately, those discussions had not taken place. He hoped over the next week or so, it would be possible to communicate further with Ms. Blaes.

The Fehr & Peers Study from 2012 that the County contracted was referenced. Chair Diegel reported that he read through it recently. He wanted to understand why the County more or less ignored the results of the study and moved in a different direction. Ed Marshall shared information about Ms. Blaes and her role. As for the Fehr & Peers Study, John Knoblock stated many times that the FLAP grant was a step toward a shuttle. It would create the infrastructure that Bekee Hotze with the U.S. Forest Service stated was necessary. In that sense, the County was working towards a shuttle with the FLAP grant. In his opinion, the remaining questions were:

* How much work needs to be done?
* How would that work intersect with bicyclist safety?

Mr. Marshall believed the Millcreek Canyon Committee wanted to make sure the amount of traffic in the canyon is not increased. This was true for both vehicles and cyclists. He was in favor of a shuttle in the upper canyon but that would not happen until the infrastructure is in place. The FLAP grant design would be partly based on having a shuttle there in the future. Until there is a shuttle available, neither the Forest Service nor the County would cut off visitors that currently drove in to recreate near the top of the canyon. That would only happen once an alternate means of transportation becomes available. It was important for non-cyclists to have access to the upper canyon until there was a way for visitors to access that portion of the canyon via shuttle.

Chair Diegel felt there needed to be more clarity about the shuttle. For instance, whether the future shuttle would be similar to what is in Zion National Park, which is 40 to 50 feet, or if the future shuttle would be more like a van. At the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting in September 2022, the County did not mention the shuttle in specific detail. He understood that the County and the Forest Service want the infrastructure in place to allow a shuttle. However, it might be worthwhile to do a pilot program, as suggested in the previous Fehr & Peers Study.

Mr. Knoblock reported that the Forest Service originally stated that they were the Land Manager and nothing would happen without their approval. At that time, Ms. Hotze also stated that the Forest Service would not approve transit up the canyon with a substandard road that did not meet minimum legal requirements. As a result, the road needs to be brought to minimum legal standards before the Forest Service will allow transit or a shuttle system. The FLAP grant would upgrade the road to the standards that would enable the Forest Service to approve a shuttle.

Chair Diegel noted that Mr. Knoblock previously asked the consultants if it would be possible to do spot improvements to bring the road to standards. The consultants did not appear to have considered that. Chair Diegel believed that the road should be improved but there were ways to accomplish what needed to be done without making a dramatic change to the canyon. The majority of the public comments seemed to reflect the same sentiment. There was a desire to maintain the current feel of the upper canyon. Mr. Knoblock reminded the Committee Members that the County owns the road. The engineers indicated that the road was failing and not built on a proper road base. The cost to fix the road and do the necessary work would be on Salt Lake County unless the FLAP grant process moves forward. The County and Millcreek both wanted to see the FLAP grant work continue so that the work could be done.

Paul Diegel had never heard anyone refer to legal requirements for a shuttle. There had been some discussions about standards but it was his understanding that there were no legal requirements for road characteristics to implement a shuttle. He believed that early on, Ms. Hotze stated that upgrading the road was a necessary condition for a shuttle. However, no commitment had been made to a shuttle. All of the discussions he had heard indicated that the shuttle was an afterthought. It was clearly not the primary objective, as there was not a lot of enthusiasm from the Forest Service and there were no specific plans. The Forest Service had only stated that to consider a shuttle the road needs to be widened. Mr. Diegel referenced the Fehr & Peers Study. Someone from the Forest Service or the County said that the study was too old and obsolete. As such, it would not be considered. That was the end of that discussion as he recalled.

Del Draper reported that Ms. Hotze previously shared several reasons why a shuttle could not happen. One concern was that a shuttle would cause bunching on trails. There needed to be a National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) analysis before that was allowed. A better road may be necessary to have a shuttle but there did not seem to be any actual shuttle planning taking place. It was possible that the FLAP grant work would be completed and Ms. Hotze would have additional reasons why a shuttle could not work. He suggested that the Millcreek Canyon Committee ask for shuttle planning to be integrated into the FLAP grant work. Mr. Draper added that there needed to be a shuttle in Millcreek Canyon or robust public transportation in the other canyons before the number of vehicles could be reduced. It could not be done otherwise. He reiterated that he wanted to see more planning for the shuttle built into the FLAP grant itself.

Mike Christensen wondered if the Forest Service had ever shown the Millcreek Canyon Committee where the shuttle requirements were coming from. Chair Diegel had not seen any data. That being said, during the September 2022 meeting, there were discussions about the lane widths. Executive Director of Policy, Lindsey Nielsen referenced the question posed by Mr. Christensen. She reported that the Millcreek Canyon Committee started as the Millcreek Canyon Shuttle Committee. It was possible to listen to previous discussions between Ms. Hotze and the Committee as the recording and the Meeting Minutes were accessible on the CWC website.

Chair Diegel reported that the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance had been running shuttles up Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon for a few years once a season. The Forest Service would only allow those shuttles to stop at Solitude and Brighton. They would not allow those shuttles to stop at the bus stops at Cardiff and Spruces. His concerns came from past experiences with the Forest Service as the Forest Service seemed determined to keep as many vehicles on the road as possible. It seemed that the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) wanted to do the same. He was not optimistic about limiting the number of vehicles in the tri-canyons.

Mr. Knoblock noted that the Forest Plan stated that the Forest Service would work with partners to try to minimize personal vehicles. The Forest Plan recognized that too many vehicles in the canyons was an issue. When it was in the Forest Plan, that allowed the Forest Service to proceed. However, according to Ms. Hotze, there would not be transit at trailheads without NEPA. Mr. Diegel believed there was a desire to see a definitive plan that outlined how that could happen. Mr. Knoblock suggested that the Committee ask Ms. Hotze what was needed to start that process so there was a parallel path rather than the road work being completed before even starting the necessary NEPA processes that were required by the Forest Service.

Chair Diegel reported that he emailed Helen Peters about the status of NEPA for the design that had not been completed. Ms. Peters indicated that there was an environmental assessment taking place. He was not sure how an environmental assessment could take place on a design that had not been finalized. Another message had been sent to her for clarification. Chair Diegel wondered if federal agencies were able to do NEPA work on unfinalized projects. Mr. Knoblock confirmed this. He pointed out that had been done for Little Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Diegel believed that the preliminary assessment was intended to inform the final design.

It was suggested that the Millcreek Canyon Committee encourage the Forest Service and the County to prioritize the shuttle work. Additionally, during the next public comment period and open house for the FLAP grant, opinions could be shared about the next phase of the design and comments could encourage the NEPA work associated with a shuttle.

**MOTION:** John Knoblock moved that the Millcreek Canyon Committee prepare a letter to the Forest Service, encouraging the NEPA work associated with a shuttle move in parallel with the FLAP grant road improvements. The letter would be forwarded to the Stakeholders Council and CWC Board for approval. Del Draper seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Diegel offered to work on a draft of that letter. He would send out the draft to Committee Members for feedback. It would be best for the letter to be brief and to the point. Executive Director of Administration, Blake Perez reported that the next Stakeholders Council Meeting was scheduled for April 28, 2023. There was another at the end of May 2023. It would be possible to share the letter with the Stakeholders Council at either one of those meetings. Chair Diegel noted that there was a Transportation Committee Meeting scheduled soon that he planned to attend. It might be worth sharing a comment related to the letter during the public comment portion of that meeting. This would inform Committee Members that the letter had been drafted.

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

Mr. Knoblock reported that the replacement bridge work at Elbow Fork would take place over the summer. He believed the County was paying for that and it was an $80,000 project. In addition to the bridge improvement, there was pedestrian crosswalk striping across the road where the bridge ended. There would also be a short section of trail built from the far side of that crosswalk that looped around to connect it to the Pipeline Trail. People would cross the road at a 90-degree angle and then be off the road. Chair Diegel thanked him for the update on that work.

Mr. Knoblock informed the Committee that in May and June, another project would be completed. This one had to do with the Bonneville Shoreline Trail across the base of Grandeur Peak to the end of the Pipeline Trail. He reviewed the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan timeline. There would be a draft version released in July, which would be followed by a 60-day public comment period. After that, there would be time spent revising the draft and another public comment period would be held. In approximately one year, the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan would be finalized. Something he had proposed was to have the trail continue from the Rattlesnake Trailhead down parallel to the road. This would allow there to be bicycle access without filling up the parking lot.

Ms. Nielsen reminded Committee Members that the short-term projects call for ideas was currently open. It would close on April 3, 2023. The CWC would love to see project proposals related to Millcreek Canyon. Committee Members with ideas could submit proposals before the deadline. Mr. Diegel asked for additional details about the program. Ms. Nielsen reported that the call for ideas opened on March 6, 2023. The first stage of the application process involved a project idea worksheet. Two questions needed to be answered and submitted as well for initial review. Between April 3, 2023, and April 14, 2023, she would reach out to the group of finalists and ask for additional information. For instance, a full budget for the project and a full timeline for the project. The Short-Term Projects Committee would meet in mid-April.

The CWC has $50,000 in the budget to allocate to short-term projects. That was the lowest amount the organization has committed to short-term projects since the grant program started in 2020. The full list of project criteria was on the CWC website for review. Proposals could not ask the CWC for more than $15,000. In addition, projects needed to fulfill one or more of the four focus areas of the CWC. A list of previously awarded projects was on the CWC website.

Patrick Shea wondered if a proposal to integrate the Visitor Use Study with the Environmental Dashboard was within the parameters of a short-term project. Ms. Nielsen explained that the integration was already happening. The hope was that there would be a June 2023 rollout of both the Visitor Use Study and the integration of that data.

Mr. Marshall reported that he sent out an email related to a traffic study. It had to do with the number of vehicles that come up the canyon. He strongly believed that the data was not complete and did not include the vehicles that paid daily as opposed to having an annual pass. There had been a response to that email, but he had not heard anything further. Chair Diegel noted that the Fehr & Peers study seemed to be fairly accurate and the numbers were much higher. Even the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance numbers from the trail counters at Porter Fork and Millcreek Canyon indicated that the vehicle numbers were far higher than what had been listed.

Mr. Knoblock asked about the schedule and the scope of the fire resiliency project for Millcreek Canyon. He believed the Forest Service would start to make some corridors through the upper canyon to reduce fire risk. Patrick Nelson explained that he could not speak for the Forest Service. However, last fall there was some fuels reduction on the trail from Elbow Fork to the pass at Lambs Canyon. He believed there were plans to do more fuels reduction in Millcreek over the summer. Mr. Nelson clarified that he did not know where the work would be or to what degree.

Mr. Knoblock asked for a status update on the Watershed Management Plan. Mr. Nelson reported that the draft recommendations would be taken to the stakeholders in the spring. The dates were currently being finalized. After that point, there would be a draft for public review. He explained that the plan would direct the future of the policy and activities to protect the water supply. There would be recommendations for each canyon and recommendations that were watershed-wide. The last time there was a Watershed Management Plan was in 1999. Moving forward, the goal was to update the plan every 5 to 10 years in order to keep the information relevant.

**Adjourn**

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

**MOTION:** John Knoblock moved to ADJOURN the Millcreek Canyon Committee. Ed Marshall seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:20 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Stakeholders Council Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting held Monday, March 20, 2023.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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