

MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL MILLCREEK CANYON COMMITTEE MEETING HELD MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021, AT 1:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY WITHOUT A PHYSICAL LOCATION, AS AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER DATED MARCH 18, 2020.

Present:

Committee Members: Chair Paul Diegel, John Knoblock, Ed Marshall, Del Draper,

19 Brian Hutchinson

Others: Helen Peters, Rita Lund, Bekee Hotze, Lance Kovel, Marshall Alford, Jason Schnsetter, Polly Hart, Hilary Jacobs, Mike Jenkins, David Carroll, Patrick Shea, Steve

Van Maren, Mike Mikhalev

 CWC Executive Director Ralph Becker, CWC Deputy Director Blake Perez, CWC Communications Director Lindsey Nielsen, Office Administrator Kaye Mickelson

Opening

Staff:

1. <u>Chair Paul Diegel will Open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Millcreek Canyon Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council and Read the Determination of the Chair.</u>

Chair Paul Diegel called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

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

'As the Chair of the Millcreek Canyon Committee of the Stakeholders Council of the Central Wasatch Commission, I have determined that conducting Committee 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 cases 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. As a result, the meeting will be conducted virtually.'

2. Review and Approval of the Minutes from the June 21, 2021, Meeting.

MOTION: Ed Marshall moved to approve the Meeting Minutes from the June 21, 2021, Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting. Del Draper seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

Future Direction for the Millcreek Committee – What Are Our Next Steps?

1. <u>Discussion with Bekee Hotze from the Salt Lake Ranger District: Visions of the Future for Millcreek Canyon.</u>

Chair Diegel reported that Bekee Hotze from the U.S. Forest Service would join the meeting at approximately 2:00 p.m. Until then, he asked for feedback regarding next steps for the Committee. He explained that the Central Wasatch Commission ("CWC") Stakeholders Council Co-Chairs, Will McCarvill and Barbara Cameron, asked the Committee to create a list that outlined what the Millcreek Canyon Committee had accomplished in the past year as well as a list outlining the next steps.

Del Draper discussed Camp Tracy. He felt the most appropriate action to take was to continually monitor the situation. The Millcreek Canyon Committee could let the Boy Scouts know that some sort of conservation easement could likely be facilitated if they chose to move in that direction.

Chair Diegel pointed out that a comment was left in the Zoom chat box by Brian Hutchinson. Mr. Hutchinson referenced the City Creek Canyon Road Study that addressed the safety of pedestrians and wildlife. Chair Diegel believed Mr. Hutchinson wanted the Forest Service to incorporate what had been learned in City Creek and apply that information to Millcreek. Mr. Hutchinson stated that there had been a lack of commitment from the Forest Service for a thorough study. Lance Kovel from the Forest Service believed Mr. Hutchinson was asking if the Forest Service could look at what was done in City Creek for potential applications in Millcreek. Mr. Hutchinson clarified that there had been a lack of communication for several months as it relates to the change in direction for Millcreek Canyon Road. He wanted a commitment from the Forest Service that they would share each step of the process.

 Mr. Kovel addressed some of the concerns expressed about the Federal Lands Access Program ("FLAP") grant process. In the beginning, when the County, Forest Service, and Millcreek were preparing the application, there was a meeting with the Millcreek Canyon Committee to gather information and consider a potential scope. The initial application that the project partners submitted to the Federal Highway Administration ("FHWA") was for the entire canyon. When the application was submitted, it was quickly determined that the dollar amount for the entire canyon was more than FHWA was willing to commit. It would have resulted in the project partners needing to raise millions of dollars more than anticipated to accommodate that scope.

 Working with FHWA during the application process, the project scope was narrowed due to constructability and eligibility to apply for future grants. Mr. Kovel explained that one of the criteria the FHWA had was that they did not want to improve transportation infrastructure and then have to drive over the same areas to fix portions of the upper canyon at a later date. As a result, they wanted to begin work in the upper canyon and work down in a phased approach. What was awarded by the FHWA was funding to improve the top 4.5 miles of the canyon. The project partners anticipated coming back during the next call for projects to do another FLAP grant application, which would include the lower portion of the canyon. Mr. Hutchinson expressed concerns about the scope of the project and the dramatic shift in ideals.

Chair Diegel noted that the Committee discussed those concerns in the past and would continue to discuss them in the future as plans continue to come together. A flyer was distributed to the Committee Members with a timeline of how the engineering design would proceed and when the public comment periods would take place. However, he wanted to focus the current conversation on Millcreek Canyon Committee goals.

John Knoblock believed the Committee should share comments related to the FLAP grant during the public comment period in November 2021. It would be nice if a list of recommendations could be vetted through the Stakeholders Council and CWC Board. Mr. Draper wondered what the deadline was. Chair Diegel believed the public comment period would last until the end of November. Mr. Draper was unsure that the Committee could vet those comments through both the Stakeholders Council and CWC Board in that amount of time. Chair Diegel wondered if the comments need to be vetted by the Council and Board or whether it was possible for the Committee to submit comments directly. CWC Communications Director, Lindsey Nielsen reported that the process was as follows:

- Items are discussed at a Committee-level and moved forward to the Stakeholders Council;
- Items are reviewed by the full Stakeholders Council; and
- Anything approved by the Stakeholders Council can be moved forward to the full CWC Board for review and final approval.

Chair Diegel felt there were certain constraints associated with that process. As a result, the Committee would need to quickly prepare comments to obtain the necessary approvals within the allotted timeframe. Continued conversations may need to take place via email or during a Special Meeting. Helen Peters reported that there would not be engineering designs to comment on until Spring 2022. The first public comment period would take place from November 9, 2021, to December 9, 2021, and there would be an open house event on November 9, 2021, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The purpose of the FLAP grant project was to enhance recreational use and roadway safety. Chair Diegel believed the first public comment period was an ideal time to contribute suggestions that could further those FLAP grant project area goals.

 Mr. Draper wondered if there was any new information related to parking enhancements. Mr. Kovel explained that there are different phases of design. The initial phase was taking place currently and essentially includes the scope of the project. He noted that the project partners were

looking for public comments that could be shared directly with the design team. In terms of the parking enhancements, that information was not currently known.

Chair Diegel stated that the Millcreek Canyon Committee needs to meet again shortly to focus on comments related to the FLAP grant, either via email or during a Special Meeting. He believed the Committee would have something ready to share with the Stakeholders Council before November 9, 2021, and that would allow one month for CWC Board approval. CWC Deputy Director, Blake Perez suggested that the Millcreek Canyon Committee aim for CWC Board approval at the CWC Board Meeting scheduled for December 6, 2021, and work backward. If there is an approved document from the Stakeholders Council before that date, the item would be added to the CWC Board Meeting agenda.

Mr. Knoblock pointed out that there could be a set of broad comments, such as:

- The Millcreek Canyon Committee would like to see road improvements so that it would be feasible to have a shuttle bus at some point in the future with appropriate stops; and
- The Millcreek Canyon Committee would like to ensure that the road lanes maintain a nine-foot-width and that a bicycle lane be added.

Chair Diegel felt those were excellent examples and summarized a lot of the previous discussion points. Mr. Perez suggested that the Millcreek Canyon Committee discuss the FLAP grant and public comment period at the Stakeholders Council Meeting on October 20, 2021. This would inform the Council Members that the draft comments would be shared in the future. Mr. Draper noted that another broad comment could be as follows:

• The Millcreek Canyon Committee has concerns about whether the money should be spent on the upper portion or the lower portion of the canyon since there was no guarantee that a second FLAP grant would be awarded in the future.

Mr. Draper also felt that it might be worth sharing a comment related to the future use of the upper portion of the canyon. For instance, could there be a future where that area was not road-based and became more focused on hiking or bicycling. Chair Diegel felt those were great comments.

Ed Marshall shared suggestions related to the next steps for the Millcreek Canyon Committee. He noted that the Committee could revisit the recommendations they made last year. A lot of thought, time, and energy had been spent on those recommendations and they were respectfully received. However, they had not been a priority after January 2021. It might be beneficial to take another look and determine if there were any that should be pursued further. Additionally, he liked having public officials attend the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meetings and found it to be helpful. He wondered if it was possible for public officials to attend regularly and share updates related to their particular areas of expertise. Chair Diegel thought that was a great goal. He also noted that the Millcreek Canyon Committee wanted to remain a resource for the Stakeholders Council and CWC as it related to Millcreek-related issues.

 Mr. Knoblock wondered if the Committee could serve as a sounding board to the Forest Service with respect to their new Enforcement and Education Rangers. When messages are shared at the winter gate, the Committee could provide input to the Forest Service. Chair Diegel felt that was a great idea but it would depend on whether the Forest Service was interested in that kind of input.

Mr. Marshall reported that the County initially approved a bond to roto-mill and resurface the lower half of Millcreek Canyon, from the winter gate down. He believed it was a \$12 million bond that was planned for and the surveying work and engineering work had already begun. The design work would take place in the future. Mr. Knoblock wondered if that would be an alternative to the second FLAP grant. Mr. Kovel explained that it was not an alternative. The work would maintain the road for a period of time before a possible FLAP grant project could be done in the lower part of the canyon. It was part of the discussions with the FHWA.

Patrick Shea commented that the Steiner Camp was created by Richard Steiner and his father in the late 1920s to early 1930s. He believed there was a restrictive covenant stating that the property that was donated would not be available for commercial development of any type. He suggested that the CWC become the owner of the conservation easement or a non-profit organization could take over a conservation easement. Mr. Draper believed that Camp Steiner was in the Uinta Mountains and not Millcreek. Mr. Shea clarified that Camp Steiner in Millcreek had been renamed over the years. He would double-check the information and get back to the Committee with details.

Chair Diegel reported that Ms. Hotze had joined the meeting. He asked her to speak to the future of Millcreek and some of the possible challenges facing the area. Ms. Hotze shared a PowerPoint presentation and hoped that by the end of the presentation, those present would have a better understanding of some of the decisions she had made during her time as District Ranger, some of the guiding documents that she followed, and the proposed path forward for Millcreek.

Ms. Hotze explained that much of her presentation tied back to the history of Millcreek Canyon and the Civilian Conservation Corps ("CCC") era. The first instance of the CCCs could be seen in the original portal sign. There would likely need to be some changes made to the portal entry since it was built for horse-and-buggies rather than current-day vehicles or future shuttles. The north pillar, which was the smaller pillar, may need to be moved to accommodate this change.

Ms. Hotze discussed the Rock Bridge and explained that it was built by the CCC. It had excellent rock architecture and qualified as a historic site. When the bridge was rebuilt in 2018, it was important that the historic integrity be maintained. As a result, all of the rocks that were taken off of the bridge were reused for the new bridge. Ms. Hotze explained that the new bridge was much larger, as it needed to meet current safety standards, so the historic rocks were augmented with new rocks to maintain as much historic integrity as possible. The new bridge had a wider path and was a box culvert instead of a shorter culvert. She overviewed some of the donor organizations that contributed to the bridge project.

The Historic Guard Station was mentioned. Ms. Hotze reported that it was built in 1936. When one of the posts needed to be replaced, a post that looked as similar as possible was selected. At the same time that the post was replaced, the entire building was repainted and re-roofed to

maintain the historic integrity. She noted that the shutters were brought inside, but they had a tree cut-out at the top, which illustrated the attention to detail during that era.

The Millcreek Garage was discussed. It is immediately adjacent to the Historic Guard Station, with the original structure on the left. The garage was rebuilt in 1996 on the right-hand side, which completely lost the character of the original structure. Ms. Hotze explained that the building ended up not being large enough, so it was rebuilt again. When it was rebuilt, it was done in a way that matched the historic integrity and matched the look of the Historic Guard Station.

 Ms. Hotze reported that the Rattlesnake Trailhead had been completed and restrooms added. She noted that the restrooms were not the final design but were received for free. The intent was to eventually replace the restrooms with ones that match the rest of the canyon restrooms. Roadside parking was discussed. Ms. Hotze wanted to eliminate roadside parking because it was unsafe for visitors to open their doors into oncoming traffic.

The kiosks were addressed and Ms. Hotze explained that she did not want to add more and more signs. She shared sample images of a kiosk with multiple signs. The issue was that when a kiosk has multiple signs attached to it, visitors become confused and do not know what signs to read or what the important information is. The goal was to make all of the signs in Millcreek Canyon easy to follow. There should be cohesion, graphics, and pictures should grab the attention of visitors and the material should be easy to understand.

Ms. Hotze shared an image with the Committee to illustrate what visitors to Millcreek Canyon first saw. The Forest Service had been working with the City of Millcreek and the County to relocate the booth, put in a permanent area for employee parking, and add a permanent bathroom. Rita Lund added that an additional lane coming out of the canyon to avoid backups was also proposed. Ms. Hotze shared some of the challenges facing Millcreek Canyon:

• Roadside Parking:

 O Unsafe and can cause damage to the portion of the roadway where visitors drive on and off the pavement. In addition, it degrades the user experience and the intention to connect to nature. It also leads to excessive automobile use and reduces the likelihood that visitors would take public transportation or a shuttle.

• Obscure Roadside Signs:

Millcreek Canyon has a lot of vegetation alongside the road and signs, bicyclists and oncoming vehicles can be obscured. While it is important to maintain the natural integrity and viewshed of the canyon, improvements must also be made for safety. One option is a shaded fuel break, which would move enough of the vegetation next to the road so that if a fire came down from one side, the fire would drop from a canopy fire in the treetops down to the ground where there was grass or lower vegetation. It would act as a place where the fire could be caught.

• Uniformity:

- Having a common theme throughout the canyon or across all three canyons would allow users to identify more readily with the trailheads and campgrounds.
- Road Condition:

o Natural erosion occurs and the road condition worsens. Repairs need to be made to ensure that the erosion does not cause further issues.

Ms. Hotze noted that although much had been accomplished since she became District Ranger in 2016, there was much more to do. Without a huge influx of funds, the Forest Service would not be able to fix everything that needs to be fixed and they would continue to fall further behind. She reported that a site visit took place with the County a few years ago, as they wanted a bicycle lane up to the winter gate. Unfortunately, that would require erosion control measures and an improvement of the road base. It was quickly determined that those requirements exceeded the funding available. As a result, an application was submitted to FHWA.

The Forest Service also looked at possible funding sources for fuels treatment. The intention was to reduce the overall intensity of unwanted wildfire impacts, improve forest health, improve public and private infrastructure, and improve sightlines. This was a multi-phase project and the Forest Service submitted various applications and proposals for funding. Ms. Hotze reported that the Forest Service had also been working with The Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands and the Unified Fire Authority ("UFA") on roadside brushing. That project would improve sightlines, help create a fuel break on the side of the road and provide better access for larger vehicles.

Ms. Hotze stated that one of the guiding documents used by the Forest Service was the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Revised Forest Plan, which was completed in 2003. She explained some of the terminology included in the plan, such as:

- Desired Future Condition: a long-term goal or vision;
- Standard: mandatory adherence; and
- Guideline: preferred or advisable course of action.

The page in the plan related to Millcreek roads, trails, and access was shared. Ms. Hotze explained that it specifies that the parking capacity should not exceed 2000 levels. This was a desired featured condition but not a standard or guideline. Parking within the parking lots had not been increased beyond the 2000 levels, but roadside parking had in essence increased that use. If roadside parking is eliminated, it would allow the Forest Service to have management options. For instance, there could be a sign as visitors enter Millcreek Canyon showing the number of parking spaces available at the different trailheads or a permit system could be implemented. Once those options are exhausted and there is still more need than availability, it would be appropriate to start moving forward with a shuttle service.

Ms. Hotze outlined some of the considerations for a shuttle service. The infrastructure, which included restrooms, trailheads, and the road itself, would need to be updated to safely accommodate shuttles. The FLAP grant could help with that. In addition, there would need to be consideration for mixed uses on the shuttles and parking. Ms. Hotze noted that the latter was especially important to consider. Visitors cannot infringe upon the City of Millcreek and park on City streets to take a shuttle up the canyon. There needs to be some sort of partnership in place to ensure that enough parking is available for that purpose. Some of the unintended consequences

related to shuttles were discussed, such as long wait times and impacts on the natural environment. Additionally, drop-off areas could become disturbed by high use levels.

Ms. Hotze stated that there needs to be a comprehensive evaluation of the existing Forest Service trail system, including user-created trails. She reported that Zinnia Wilson had been working with partners to try to find funding for a Trails Master Plan. It was important to determine where visitors were going, to look into the different user-created trails, and create a comprehensive Trail Management Plan for the canyons.

 The Built Environment Image Guide was another guiding document used by the Forest Service. There was a section in the guide that pertained to the area and it was on Page 159. Ms. Hotze stressed the importance of the visual integrity of the canyons and the CCC era. The Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service was a national document that included 12 examples of what kiosks should look like. There was also regional guidance for signs that included a template.

There was further discussion regarding the restrooms. Ms. Hotze shared example photos of a prefabricated restroom with a rock façade on the bottom. She felt that type of design would fit in well in all three canyons. Ms. Hotze stressed the importance of not attracting graffiti. Wasatch Graffiti Busters had done an excellent job in the last few years. Additionally, if the canyons are clean and well maintained, visitors will be more likely to keep the area clean. The Forest Service also wanted to make sure the trails are well maintained, conflicts between user groups are minimized, and that the forest looks and functions like a forest.

Chair Diegel wondered how often the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Forest Plan needed to be revised. Ms. Hotze stated that it is done every 30 years or so. Polly Hart asked for additional details about the bridge replacement discussed earlier in the presentation. Ms. Hotze explained that during reconstruction, they were unable to use the same materials because some materials work better than others in terms of freeze and frost. It was also important to make the bridge safer for current vehicles. Ms. Hart believed the changes made during reconstruction had to do with safety and longevity, which Ms. Hotze confirmed.

Mr. Hutchinson shared a comment in the Zoom chat box related to vehicles and parking. Ms. Hotze explained that making certain changes, like eliminating roadside parking without making accommodations in the parking lot for that roadside parking, would be perceived as a loss. Mr. Hutchinson noted that there was some concern that the current plan involves a lot of infrastructure that would invite vehicles into the canyon. The more vehicles there are, the higher the chances of collisions and fires. He felt it was short-sighted to invest in a vehicle-centric system when the public was calling for a shuttle system. Ms. Hotze understood that some people want shuttles. However, there had been discussions about wanting shuttles since the Land Management Plan came out in 2003 and they had not materialized. She was trying to take deliberate steps forward. Once the roadside parking is eliminated, the parking lots and a permit system are exhausted, visitors will be incentivized to use a shuttle system rather than personal vehicles.

Ms. Nielsen asked about the money needed for cutting and chipping in Millcreek. Ms. Hotze noted that the costs for Lambs Canyon are approximately \$1.75 million and there are about 20 different funding sources for that work. The Millcreek cutting and chipping project timeline will depend

entirely on funding. Some of the work could begin next summer and the intention was to complete the project in a couple of years. However, the specifics could vary based on funding and contracts. Ms. Hotze offered to send additional information to Ms. Nielsen.

Chair Diegel thanked Ms. Hotze for her insightful presentation. The information would be useful for the Millcreek Canyon Committee moving forward.

Other Business and Updates Relating to Millcreek Canyon.

Chair Diegel stated that he would send an email to Millcreek Canyon Committee Members to finalize the list of draft goals and start discussions related to the FLAP grant comments. Following the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting, several draft goals were proposed to guide the Committee activities for the next year. The draft goals were as follows:

- Continue to monitor and support the FLAP Grant project development process and provide input to maximize the public benefit of that effort;
- Continue to monitor and provide feedback on Federal, County, and City agency development as well as management plans and activities in Millcreek Canyon, based on the mission and objectives established in the Mountain Accord process and CWC charter;
- Continue to monitor the status of Camp Tracy and act to maximize the public benefit of that property;
- Continue to press for adoption of strategies, communication efforts, and actions to maximize user experience and safety in Millcreek Canyon; and
- Continue to serve as a resource to the CWC, advising on Millcreek Canyon-related issues.

Adjournment.

1. <u>Chair Diegel will Close the Public Meeting as Chair of the Millcreek Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.</u>

The Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Millcreek 1 2

Canyon Committee Meeting held Monday, October 18, 2021.

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Teri Forbes

- 5 Teri Forbes
- 6 T Forbes Group
- 7 Minutes Secretary

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Minutes Approved: