

Utah Quality Growth Commission Meeting

Wednesday, July 25, 2007, 11:00 AM, American West Heritage Center, Cache County, Utah

Meeting Minutes

Some commission members joined the meeting by phone for the purpose of obtaining a quorum

Members present

Jaren Davis, Chairman
Flint Richards, Vice Chairman
Laraine Swenson
Sally Elliott
Brent Tanner
Mike Styler
Mike Kohler
Ken Mitchell

Laura Ault
Brian Cottam

Visitors

Nicol Gagstetter, The Nature Conservancy
Barry Nash, Trust for Public Land
Morris Mower
Steven DeLong, Executive Director,
American West Heritage Center
Craig Peterson, Cache County Council
Fred Hunsaker, State Representative
Jack Draxler, State Representative
Brian Carver, Bear River Association of
Governments
Darwin Hall, Ash Creek Special Service
District
Dr. Dave Bell, Utah State University
Jordie Gouth, USU Student Contractor,
Evan Curtis, USU Student Contractor

Members Excused

Leonard Blackham
Larry Ellertson
Darrell Smith
Justin Allen

Staff Present

John Bennett
Mike Mower

Chairman Jaren Davis conducted the meeting

1—Welcome and introductions

Chairman Davis welcomed everyone to the meeting. He commented that we live in a beautiful state, and complimented everyone for making the effort to come to Cache County. He invited Brent Tanner and Mike Styler to comment on the fires that are burning in the state and the things that are being done to fight them and restore the burned areas.

Brent reported on the various fires burning in the state, and indicated that nearly 500,000 acres have burned. He also indicated that there is a lot of strategic planning happening in the state right now, to deal with the fires, to reseed, reclaim the land, and get it back to proper health. The work now is to meet the immediate needs of ranchers and firefighters, but also to plan for restore the land after the fires are out.

Mike Styler gave an update on the size of all the fires burning in the state as of that day, and also indicated that we have lots of resources helping to contain the fires.

Jaren Davis added that he and Brett had talked in personal terms about the size and impact of some of these fires. Chairman Davis indicated that he felt these fires validated the effort put in at the Legislature this year to promote the need to prepare and to conserve for just such events.

2—Public Comments

Mike Mower introduced himself to the Commissioners. He also brought greetings from the Governor, and indicated that the Governor would like the Commission do spend some time discussing Affordable Housing and Workforce Housing this year and partner with the planning section and the governor and others on trying to find solutions to this issue in the coming year.

3—Approval of Minutes from May 23, 2007, and June 27, 2007 Meetings

No Corrections to the minutes were noted.

The Minutes for both months were approved with four members voting by telephone

4— Critical Lands Subcommittee Report: report on McAllister Fund Applications, and Site Visits, Schedule additional visits

John Bennett distributed a spreadsheet detailing the full applications received, and a schedule of site visits. He indicated that the requests were for about \$5 million and that we have available in this round of funding about \$2.4 million. John indicated that there were 15 full applications received. Three visits were completed while the commission was in Cache County for this meeting, leaving 12 more still to be done. He indicated that he would work with the applicants to schedule those visits and asked the Commissioners to assist in making those visits.

John agreed to send the schedule by e-mail to commissioners for their review.

A-Discussion of Request from Washington County and Ash Creek Service District to waive payment on condemnation of sewer easement in Confluence Park, John Bennett, and Darwin Hall, Superintendent, Ash Creek Special Service District

John Bennett explained the project, and the Commissions role. The Confluence Park, which is at the confluence of Ash Creek and the Virgin River, near St. George, has a conservation easement in place held by the Department of Natural Resources. This easement was partially funded by money from the LeRay McAllister Fund.

The Easement allows for the relocation of existing utilities when they are threatened by movement of the river. Such movement occurred two years ago when the Virgin River flooded. As these existing utilities are being moved, the Ash Creek Special Service District wants to extend its sewer line beyond the current easement. The Conservation Easement prevents this, unless the special service district condemns a new easement. The district has agreed to condemn the necessary easement for the sewer line extension across the property. All of the other partners have agree to waive their compensation for this new easement because the extended sewer line may have important conservation benefits.

The District is now asking the Quality Growth Commission to waive the compensation it is due on the condemned sewer easement in return for the conservation benefits. At its last meeting, the Commission asked the District, and Washington County and other partners to supply information regarding the Conservation Benefits, and the management plan for the park. These have been supplied. In addition, the Utah Department of Natural Resources has sent the Commission a letter outlining the conservation values of the proposed sewer line extension, and the connection that will provided so that restroom facilities in the park can be connected to the sewer line. The Department believes that the area is very wet, and not well suited to a septic system. There are several endangered fish species in this confluence that rely on the clean water that comes from preserving the park. The Department feels that the best way to preserve that water quality is to have a sewer connection so that restroom facilities in the park do not contaminate the ground water.

The commissioners generally recognized the value to the park of the sewer line, but the issue for several commission members was that if the money for the condemned easement were transferred to the McAllister Fund, the commission could approve using it to fund a sewer line or restroom. So, they were concerned about approving this proposal under those circumstances. Mr. Bennett explained that the Grant agreement allows them to approve this if it protects the conservation values, and they can treat this differently because the money will not be transferred to the fund. Mike Styler, Commission member and Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources spoke in favor of approving the project. Flint Richard, Commission Vice Chair expressed his concern about using approving this project because of the use the funds were going for.

Mr. Bennett explained that this is the first time that their has been a condemnation on an easement funded by the commission, so we are breaking new ground with this. He also stated that any precedent applies only to situations where a condemnation is proposed, so it does not establish a precedent to our regular process.

Mike Styler moved that the commission waive its cash payment for this condemnation, and accept the work being proposed by the district in lieu of payment. Sally Elliott seconded the motion. The motion carried with Flint Richards abstaining and Laraine Swenson voting no. Four commissioners contacted by telephone voted to approve the motion.

B-Discuss emergency appropriation for reseeded fire areas.

John Bennett reminded the Commission that the Provo City Rock Canyon Grant was withdrawn, freeing up \$200,000 for other uses. The need exists to buy seed to restore areas burned by fires, and Mike Styler is requesting that we reprogram the money for that purpose. Mike explained that the seed is a blend of native and other grasses designed to compete effectively with cheatgrass, and to stay green longer in the summer time. Some is available in the DNR seed warehouse and some in other places.

Brent Tanner moved to support this emergency reallocation and to allow the DNR and DAF to submit an emergency application to be considered along with the others in this round. Flint Richards Seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with four members voting by telephone.

5—Presentation from Dr. Dave Bell, Utah State University re: Planning Assistance to Rural Communities: Results of Sanpete County work, 30 Minutes

Dr. Bell reported on a project his students in the Department of Landscape Architecture at Utah State University recently completed in Sanpete County. The Students and their faculty advisors took a look at the entire corridor along US Highway 89 from Gunnison to Fairview. They conducted public meetings and held a charrette to assist the communities along this highway develop plans for growth, and to promote economic development, tourism, and other values along this corridor. Part of the effort was designed to identify and plan to preserve historic, cultural and other features that define the character of these communities.

Over 120 students participated. They were broken into 15 teams with nine students per team. Each team had an advisor who was a faculty member or private planning provider. Two teams were assigned to each of the six communities along the corridor, and three additional teams were assigned to the overall corridor. The teams spent about a week in the communities, meeting with people, and scoping out the issues. Then they returned to campus and put together a presentation with their findings. Those were presented to the communities about six weeks later.

There were two goals for the project: First, discover unique future opportunities for the National Heritage Highway, and to identify the characteristics, events, or other things that make, or can make this area special or unique. Each community had two teams assigned. One looked at parks, trails and open space,

and the other looked at the main street and downtown. The three teams assigned to the overall project looked at relationships between parks, trails and open space, the corridor and the main streets, and the overall corridor.

The purpose of these charrettes is to provide a learning experience for the communities, and to generate a lot of ideas that the communities could use as they prepare for their futures.

These charrettes provide an opportunity for the commission to build on this work with planning grant assistance to make some of these ideas a reality. Staff wanted commissioners to be aware that they were going on so that we could assist them.

6—Contract Reports, Brian Cottam, Laura Ault and contractors, 10 Minutes, Brian will introduce USU students doing work funded by the Commission. They will report on the work they are doing. Brian Cottam introduced Evan Curtis and Jordie Gouch who are USU Students working on Commission funded projects to enhance the SUPER tool and the Rural Character Toolkit.

Evan Curtis showed the work he is doing collecting ordinances and plans etc to be part of a planning library. This library will be available online to help communities do their general plans. Jordie discussed the effort she is undertaking to expand the rural character toolkit.

7__Heritage Center Information

Steve De Long, Executive Director of the American West Heritage Center gave commissioners some information about the center and its purposes. He welcomed them to the center and to Cache Valley. Following the meeting, Mr. De Long took commissioners on a tour of the parcels that are part of the application for LeRay McAllister Funding. He indicated that the Center is home to the Festival of the American West, but is also a year round heritage history resource that welcomed more than 60,000 visitors last year.

Next meeting will be in Summit County.