

Utah Quality Growth Commission Meeting

Wednesday, May 28, 2008, 11:00 AM,
Large Conference Room, Governors Office of Planning and Budget
Suite 140 Utah State Capitol
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present

Jaren Davis, Chair,
Utah Association of Realtors
Representative
Flint Richards, Vice Chair
Utah Farm Bureau Representative
Sally Elliott, Summit County Commission
Laraine Swenson, Logan City Council
Justin Allen, Centerville City Council
Mike Styler,
Executive Director
Utah Department of Natural
Resources
Larry Ellertson, Utah County Commission
Mayor Darrell Smith, Mayor of Draper City
Reed Erickson, Member at-large

Staff Present

John Bennett
Executive Director
Utah Quality Growth Commission
Evan Curtis, GOPB

Visitors Present

Val John Halford, Wasatch Front Regional
Council
Shauna Kerr, Trust for Public Land
Nicol Gagstetter, the Nature Conservancy of
Utah
Doug Clark, GOED
Jack Wilbur, Utah Department of
Agriculture and Food

1—Welcome and introductions, Chairman Jaren Davis, 5 minutes

Chairman Davis invited all the commissioners and guests to introduce themselves.

2—Public Comments--5 minutes

Nicol Gagstetter from the Nature Conservancy invited the Commissioners to take an air boat ride on the Great Salt Lake and then to an early site visit at the Jaques property. TNC is requesting LeRay McAllister Funds for preserving this property which is adjacent to the TNC Great Salt Lake Shorelands Preserve. John Bennett indicated that because we had had an application for funding for the Jaques Property last year, and the Commissioners were familiar with it, it would be appropriate for the Commission to do a site visit on this property even though they have not yet received a full application for this round of funding. He also indicated that the opportunity would not be available for air boat ride later in the year, so the ability to take that ride argued for doing the ride now.

Commissioners agreed to a boat ride on June 17, 2008 at 8:00 AM. Nicol will get the information on where to meet to John Bennett, and he will e-mail the commissioners.

Chairman Davis asked Mike Styler, Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources to take a minute to discuss the oil crisis and Utah's role in ameliorating it. Mr. Styler stated that the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining is responsible for permitting all wells in Utah that are not on federal land. Private lands, state lands and even Indian lands are permitted by Utah. He indicated that Utah turns around permits in about 30 to 45 days, while the Federal officials take 180 days or more to turn around a permit. In a recent meeting with the Governor, oil executives indicated that they are frustrated by how long it takes for permits on Federal land. So, Utah is working with BLM and other Federal agencies to see if they can assist in turning those permits around more quickly. Mr. Styler indicated that one of the biggest

problems that the BLM has is the inability to hire people to process the permits. He said that he BLM field office has 30 vacancies right now. Most people who go to vernal want the highest wages which are in the oil fields, not working for the government.

Mr. Styler indicated that recent discoveries outside the Uintah Basin have been promising. The highest producing wells in Utah right now are in Sevier County near Sigurd. We also have another field in the North part of the county near Mayfield that is promising. And some exploration for oil is taking place in Iron County near Parowan.

Mr. Styler also talked about oil shale. Technology is going to have to help us with this one. We have a lot of shale, but we may not be able to exploit until the technology comes along. With current technology you have to mine it, crush it, cook it, and with cooking comes the oil. Then you have to return the spent rock to the ground. It would be like the Kennecott Copper mine all out through the basin, and environmentally, I don't know how we are ever going to do that, he said.

In Colorado, there are efforts to heat the shale in place, and pump it out without mining it, but the technology and the permitting agencies will have to work together for this to happen. Mr. Styler indicated that about 30 percent of the oil refined in Utah comes from Tar Sands in Canada. Canada is giving up thousands of acres to produce this oil, apparently they don't have the same environmental restrictions there that we do here.

Mr. Styler also indicated that alternative fuels will come online such as compressed natural gas, hydrogen and others that could help power vehicles in the future.

3—Approval of Minutes from April 23, 2008 meetings

ACTION ITEM: Approve April meeting minutes—5 minutes

Their were no changes and the meeting minutes were accepted as written.

4—Critical Lands Subcommittee Report—Pre-applications for 2008, 20 minutes, Mike Kohler and John Bennett

Mr. Bennett explained that there are two action items recommended by the Subcommittee. First is to approve an extension for Trout of Paradise until June 30, 2008. This project is progressing, negotiations on the easement have slowed it down, but they expect to close shortly. The subcommittee recommended an extension

Sally Elliott asked that the recommendation from the Subcommittee be voted on. It was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bennett explained that the second item was approving the recommendation from the Subcommittee to invite all those who submitted pre-applications to submit full applications. He indicated that all of the pre-applications met the requirements of the act except the American Fork application, and that this application could meet the requirements of the act if it were modified. Mr. Bennett indicated that he would work with American Fork to ensure that it met the requirements when it submitted a full application.

The Commission indicated that since the subcommittee had reviewed the pre-applications in detail, they would not repeat that effort.

ACTION ITEM: Act on Subcommittee Recommendation on Pre-applications

Chairman Davis placed the subcommittee's recommendation before the commission. It was approved unanimously. A copy of the subcommittee's recommendations is attached.

5—Presentation: Utah Department of Agriculture and Food Strategic Planning Process, Jack Wilbur, UDAF 30 Minutes

Mr. Jack Wilbur explained that the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food is writing a strategic plan this year. As part of that effort, they are visiting partner groups, commission, and coalitions to talk about what they do, and to get some feedback. That is why he is here. What are we doing well? What could we be doing better? Where should we focus our attention in the future?

Mr. Wilbur asked questions and solicited input from the Commissioners. He indicated that he is seeking frank and honest input. He is open to input from anyone in the room.

First Question: When you hear Department of Agriculture and Food what do you think about? Participant's responses include food inspection, gas pumps, representation in State budgetary and legislative processes, consumer assurance—consumers can feel confident about the food produced in Utah, farmers markets, conservation—conserving agricultural land and promoting the industry. Mr. Wilbur asked if those were different. Participants indicated that conservation and promotion go hand in hand—there is no point in preserving agricultural land if producers can't make money. Another thought was prevention, the Department puts in place practices that safeguard the industry and keep diseases out. Another idea presented was the political advocacy of agricultural protection through the agricultural protection act and other things.

Second Question: Besides this commission, what boards, organizations or agencies do the members work on with members of our agency?

Participants responses include realtors, homebuilder, planners, local government officials, farm bureau, cattlemen's association, Utah Department of Natural Resources. All of these groups represented by the Commission will be looking at some of the same issues from different perspectives. In the course of their work, they all work with the Department. Other responses include RC and D councils, dairy associations, extension, meat packing, Cache County Critical Lands Taskforce, Cache County Agricultural Advisory Board, pest control (Japanese Beetles), mosquito abatement.

Third Question: What are some of the strengths of our agency? Participant's responses include people, experience and expertise, cheat grass and fire response, integrity of people we deal with, citizens trust the department to deal with difficult issues and protect the state and the public.

Fourth Question: What are some of the weaknesses of our agency? Participant's responses include resources or a lack thereof, the department lacks funding and sufficient manpower to get everywhere they need to be in a timely way.

Fifth Question: What are some issues we should be looking at? Both issues on our radar screen now and issues that we may not have recognized yet. Participant's responses include doing more to preserve critical agricultural land—including helping farmers with incentives and information, and helping the public understand how important it is to preserve our local farms and ranches. There is some economic work that needs to be done and published on the Value Added Agricultural Businesses. What needs to happen to keep the value added agricultural jobs here, for example how many acres are needed in production to produce the milk to keep a cheese plant operating, and how far from the plant can those acres be before it becomes economically unprofitable to ship milk to that plant. This might take the form of improved cooperation between the department and Utah State University and other colleges or producer organizations that could provide some of this information.

Participants talked about helping the public understand that food production is vital, but also that there are other values on this land that need to be preserved. One participant mentioned previous efforts to get a real estate transfer tax for preservation. Another issue mentioned was organic agriculture—someone needs to make sure that it is really organic, establish some guidelines for organic products. Another issue

is grown in Utah, consumers want to consume food that is locally grown, strengthen Utah's Own to ensure that what is purported to be a Utah product actually is.

Another idea was to promote better protection and promotion of grazing on federal lands for both producing food and improving the land to prevent fires and other problems.

One of the producers on the commission worried that this idea might limit property values. Others assured him that the idea is to get a sense for the acres needed and the distances, not to identify individual parcels, that identification happens when willing buyers and willing sellers get together to discuss a conservation easement to compensate a farmer for his property, and to preserve it.

Some of the best things we can do to support farmers is to help them niche market, go organic, corn mazes, community supported agriculture. The department needs to think outside the box as to what agriculture is.

Help get the land out of federal ownership and into state ownership to benefit the people of Utah. Mike Styler mentioned we need to not underestimate the value of public lands, we all use those lands. Larry suggested that the management needs to change.

Sixth Question: What are some of the issues that could prevent us from doing what we need to do? Participant responses include tradition—people say that is the way we have always done it. Another issue is economics—the ability to make a living as a farmer. This includes land values, transportation, the cost of inputs such as fertilizer, fuel costs, etc. The reason we buy lamb from New Zealand, grapes from Chile, and Watermelons from Mexico is because they are cheaper. They will continue to be cheaper until the economics changes.

Another idea was that the department needs better interaction with local governments to ensure that some of these ideas can happen. If a guy can't get a temporary business license for a corn maze because of regulations that make little sense in his situation, then these things won't work. We need to help local governments understand how to work with us.

Two other ideas were exotic agricultural species—elk, emu, and other species that will impact the products that are available, and also the farming of energy, bio-fuels and farming sun, and wind. These will impact our rural areas and farming.

Another idea was quality of life benefits and the willingness of the public to pay for those benefits. Another issue is water—agricultural water is now being need for development. This is new—the value of water has got to be so high.

Another issue is trust. If you come to a farm and say "I'm from the government and I'm here to help" I probably won't trust you. Often it would work better to partner with a producer group so that it is a representative of the Farm Bureau I am talking with.

This was the end of Mr. Wilbur's presentation. He promised to share the strategic plan with the Commission when it is finished

6—Road Show Update, report on Utah County COG, May 1, 2008, Summit County COG meeting, May 14, 2008 and Wasatch Front Regional Council Regional Growth Committee meeting, May 15, 2008, 20 minutes, John Bennett

Mr. Bennett updated the commission on the meetings with Utah County COG with Larry Ellertson, Summit County COG with Sally Elliott, and Wasatch Front Regional Council Regional Growth Committee. He indicated that all of these meetings went well. Some of these groups are producing

written information to supply to the legislature outlining their thoughts on planning and growth. We will continue having meetings with other groups over the summer. He is working with Justin Allen to get on the Davis and Weber County COG agendas. Laraine Swenson will help do something similar in Cache County.

7—Report on Green Infrastructure Workshop, May 5 through 9, 2008

John Bennett, 5 Minutes

Val John Halford of the Wasatch Front Regional Council and Evan Curtis of GOPB spoke about the success of the Green Infrastructure workshop which the commission sponsored. There were 45 attendees, and they worked on some useful case studies including the Jordan River and Corner Canyon. All the attendees felt it was a useful event.

8—Administrative Matters

Next Meeting, June 25, 2008, Zermatt Resort in Midway

Reminder August meeting will be Friday, August 22, 2008 in Cedar City unless another date is established