

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT
INTERIM COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, May 21, 2014 – 9:00 a.m. – Room 30 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. Scott K. Jenkins, Senate Chair
Rep. Michael E. Noel, House Chair
Sen. Allen M. Christensen
Sen. Jim Dabakis
Sen. David P. Hinkins
Sen. Peter C. Knudson
Sen. Ralph Okerlund
Rep. Jerry B. Anderson
Rep. Roger E. Barrus
Rep. Melvin R. Brown
Rep. Jack R. Draxler
Rep. Susan Duckworth
Rep. Stephen G. Handy
Rep. Ken Ivory

Rep. John G. Mathis
Rep. Mike K. McKell
Rep. Merrill F. Nelson
Rep. Douglas V. Sagers
Rep. R. Curt Webb
Rep. Larry B. Wiley

Members Absent:

Rep. Brad L. Dee
Rep. Marie H. Poulson

Staff Present:

Mr. J Brian Allred, Policy Analyst
Ms. RuthAnne Frost, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Tracey Fredman, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Jenkins called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

MOTION: Sen. Dabakis moved to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2013, meeting. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Knudson, Rep. Handy, Rep. Ivory, Rep. Mathis, and Rep. Noel absent for the vote.

Mr. John Erickson, Forest Supervisor, Ashley National Forest, extended an invitation to the committee to visit Ashley National Forest to discuss sustainable recreation and the possible decommissioning of certain campgrounds.

Mr. Allred reminded the committee that the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel is conducting a legislator survey to assess how the office performs in key areas.

2. Report on Public Lands Transfer Economic Analysis Schedule and Cost

Mr. Allred briefly introduced this agenda item. He stated that 2013 General Session H.B. 142, "Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office Amendments," requires (1) an analysis and study of the ramifications of the transfer of public lands, and (2) a report to the committee on this study.

Ms. Kathleen Clarke, Coordinator, Public Lands Policy Coordination Office, distributed the preliminary report, "Economic Analysis of Federal Lands Transfer to the State of Utah," for the study. Ms. Clarke discussed the purpose of the study, the schedule and itemized costs of the project, the study's progress and achievements so far, and the team's plan for moving forward. Ms. Clarke responded to questions from the committee.

3. Open and Public Meetings Act Training

Ms. Frost reviewed the requirements of Utah Code Title 52, Chapter 4, Open and Public Meetings Act. The committee received a copy of "Summary of Key Provisions of the Open and Public Meetings Act," which discusses the specific provisions of the act in more detail. Ms. Frost also explained the 2014 amendments to the act and responded to questions from the committee.

4. Long-Term Planning

Ms. Amanda Smith, Executive Director, Department of Environmental Quality, presented "Environmental Issues and Priorities." She stated that for the next five to ten years, the greatest challenge for the department is budget. Ms. Smith described how the federal government generates new environmental rules and regulations that the state must adopt, but the federal government does not always provide additional funding for the implementation of these rules. Ms. Smith also discussed the importance of the relationship between the department and the Office of the Attorney General, as well as the department's challenge to recruit employees, keep employees, and develop leaders within the department. Ms. Smith responded to questions from the committee.

Ms. Luann Adams, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Food, presented "Utah Department of Agriculture and Food." She stated that the department's main challenge is the modern food production system and that the urban population is disconnected from farming and ranching. She said that in order to combat consumers' lack of understanding regarding agriculture, the department is working to increase public awareness. Ms. Adams also discussed succession planning for the department, as 25% of the staff may potentially retire within the next five years. Ms. Adams responded to questions from the committee.

Mr. Mike Styler, Executive Director, Department of Natural Resources, presented "DNR Long-term Planning." He stated that the two main priorities of the department are to ensure (1) the order and certainty of water, and (2) healthy land and watersheds. He discussed how the department hopes to address these priorities by accelerating adjudication of water issues, considering a water court, developing the Watershed Restoration Initiative, and implementing catastrophic wildfire reduction strategies. Mr. Styler responded to questions from the committee.

5. Review of State Fairpark Financial Oversight and Performance

Mr. Jesse Martinson, Audit Supervisor, Office of the Legislative Auditor General, presented "A Limited Review of the Utah State Fairpark's Financial Oversight and Controls, Utah Legislative Auditor General Report to: Natural Resources, Agriculture, And Environment Interim Committee." Mr. Martinson stated that the fair's attendance has declined since 2008 and that in 2013, the fair spent \$1.2 million more than it did for the 2012 fair. Mr. Martinson explained that insufficient policies contributed to overspending, and existing policies were not well enforced, both of which contributed to the fairpark's deficit. Mr. Martinson responded to questions from the committee.

Mr. John Dougall, State Auditor, introduced Mr. Nick Purse, Office of the Utah State Auditor. Mr. Dougall stated that the Office of the Utah State Auditor completed a limited performance audit, which was different from the audit of the legislative auditor general, and that the office is currently working on a financial statement audit for the state fair, which is almost finished.

Mr. David Pulsipher, Performance Audit Director, Office of the Utah State Auditor, presented "A Limited Performance Audit of the Utah State Fair Corporation."

Mr. Pulsipher discussed the background of the fair, including information on fair attendance. He described two main findings of the office's study of the fair: (1) similar states have higher attendance and a lower state subsidy than Utah's state fair, and (2) the state has options for maximizing use of the state fairpark. Mr. Pulsipher then discussed the office's recommendations regarding these two findings. Mr. Pulsipher responded to questions from the committee.

6. Report on State Fairpark Master Plan

Mr. Joshua Haines, Director, Division of Facilities Construction and Management, responded to some of the questions brought up during the previous agenda item. Mr. Haines stated that the state fairpark inherited many of its current problems regarding its facilities. He also stated that Ms. Kathy Wheadon, CRSA Architecture, is working on a more in-depth report about the state fairpark that will examine the marketing of other fairparks, the current state of the fairpark, and future plans for the fairpark.

Ms. Wheadon stated that that the State Fairpark Master Plan does not offer budget recommendations like a business plan, but, rather, the plan aims to address the issue of how the state can use the fairpark in a way to achieve success. Ms. Wheadon described the phases of completing the report, including current fairpark conditions analysis, scenario planning, and revenue-generation ideas. She asked the committee to consider the cultural value of the state fairpark and to think about what kind of investment the state needs to make in the fairpark according to that value.

All the State Fairpark Master Plan information available thus far can be found at <http://dfcm.utah.gov/fairpark-masterplan-2014.html>.

7. Other Items/Adjourn

MOTION: Rep. Duckworth moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Knudson, Sen. Okerlund, Rep. Brown, and Rep. Webb absent for the vote.

Chair Jenkins adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.