

MINUTES
ALTA TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION & MEETING
Wednesday, September 11, 2019, 3:00 PM
Alta Community Center, 10351 E. Highway 210, Alta, Utah

PRESENT: Mayor Harris Sondak
Council Member Margaret Bourke
Council Member Cliff Curry
Council Member Elise Morgan
Council Member Sheridan Davis

STAFF PRESENT: John Guldner, Town Administrator
Chris Cawley, Assistant Town Administrator
Piper Lever, Town Clerk
Mike Morey, Town Marshal
Nora Pincus, Town Attorney
Polly Samuels, Town Attorney

WORK SESSION

1. Discussion Regarding Visitor Capacity Study in Little Cottonwood Canyon. Dr. Kelly Bricker, Director of the University of Utah’s Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Program is scheduled to speak to the Council.

00:00:01

Mayor Sondak called the work session to order at 3:04 PM. He introduced the two items for the work session and stated that they were waiting for Dr. Bricker to arrive.

Mayor Sondak provided a few thoughts on the idea of a visitor capacity study. UDOT Director Carlos Braceras has given the Central Wasatch Commission (CWC) notice that UDOT would resign its seat from the CWC effective November 21, 2019. UDOT saw the CWC as a stakeholder rather than a partner in the EIS, so they would be moving forward making their own decisions on the issue. UDOT also did not see a capacity study in their purview. The CWC has created a committee of stakeholders that would specifically study this issue. Also, UDOT was not comfortable on a “body” with elected officials, as is the case for the CWC.

Mayor Sondak invited the US Forest Service to attend this meeting, but he was told that the Forest Service would now only respond in writing to written communications. Mayor Sondak presented a letter from the Forest Service to the CWC, and there was contrasting language between this letter and the language of the EIS. One of the purpose clauses of the National Conservation and Recreation Area August 19, draft legislation, was to facilitate and accommodate improved access for a growing number of users. That statement acknowledged a general trend of growth in the area. Mayor Sondak believed that UDOT may be willing to help the Town with a growth management plan, even though they would not conduct a capacity study. If they took that

approach, it would be more like the Town was soliciting a cooperative response than dictating what needed to be done.

Council Member Bourke referred to a proposed resolution that she had drafted and handed out to the council at the beginning of the work session. Council Member Morgan asked if they would try to get the Forest Service to help with an overall capacity study. Mayor Sondak suggested that they reach out to several other entities to help either update the general plan to accommodate growth or to create a separate capacity management plan with a clear set of desired conditions. Possible agencies included the Forest Service, Salt Lake County, UDOT, Salt Lake City, the Salt Lake Valley Health Department, UTA, and the UFA.

Council Member Morgan said that the Council needs to make some decisions about what they want with the study. They need to discuss who would be in charge of the study, the goals of the study, and what concerns were driving them toward the capacity study. They also need to reach out to the citizens for public input. Council Member Bourke said that they need to balance economic growth with environmental protection.

00:52:32

Mayor Sondak introduced Dr. Kelly Bricker, who had been asked to give an overview of what a visitor capacity study might look like and how it related to some of the issues they were experiencing in the canyon. Dr. Bricker provided a PowerPoint presentation, which is attached to these minutes. Her presentation began with the mission statement within the US Forest Service's 2003 Forest Plan. One desired condition the Forest Service focuses on is preservation of the watershed. The Forest Service supports a wide spectrum of activities, but the first consideration is to protect water quality. Guidance is focused on resort balance with a comfortable carrying capacity within the capacity of the natural environment. Regarding visitor capacity, the concept does not specify a hard number.

Capacity analysis is a complex tool. Factors to consider include types and timing of use, distribution of use, visitor expectations, environmental setting, number of visitors, and site-specific factors. The accepted definition of visitor capacity is the "maximum amounts and types of visitor use that an area could accommodate while achieving and maintaining desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established or reserved." Visitor capacity is a tool that would help the Town in making allocation decisions. It helps managers, communities, and stakeholders understand why certain things are going to occur. Capacity is decided based on research and study, professional judgement, lessons learned from other areas, and public input. All of this would help determine what will be monitored to help meet the overall goals. Once desired conditions are established, then thresholds are set and monitored to determine when actions would be taken, should those thresholds be exceeded. The current Forest Plan has no thresholds. Thresholds could be set to manage for increasing population, while managing to protect the watershed. Dr. Bricker recommended gathering data on where people were going and what they were doing in the canyon. When developing visitor capacity "norms", they focus on four main areas: facility infrastructure capacity, physical capacity, biological and ecological capacity, and social capacity.

Dr. Bricker reported that the CWC had formed a committee called the Capacity Committee, and it has 17 members. At their first meeting, she was asked to create a proposal. Considering the elements that were moving right now, their recommendation was to have a “phase one” approach. They would locate and examine the existing data, to see where the information was lacking. They would subsequently move onto the second phase examining all four seasons collecting data before selectively setting thresholds. It was unclear what funds might be available for this work (maybe \$100-150K/canyon). Ultimately, she envisioned giving the recommendations to the Forest Service.

Council Member Morgan asked Dr. Bricker if the committee would support the Town in their desire for a capacity study, and Dr. Bricker answered affirmatively. The committee wanted a capacity study, but no one really could identify what that was. It was suggested that they start referring to this as a visitor management plan rather than using the word “capacity,” since people didn’t seem to respond well to it. It was suggested to educate others about the meaning of the term and its proper usage so that the widely negative connotation could be tempered.

2. Discussion of Draft Zoning Ordinance Changes

This item was not discussed.

3. Adjournment

MOTION: Council Member Curry moved to adjourn the work session at 4:59 PM. Council Member Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous consent of the Council.

ALTA TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Sondak called the meeting to order at 5:07 PM and expressed appreciation for those in attendance.

2. SALT LAKE COUNTY MEMBER JIM BRADLEY – INTRODUCTION

Mayor Sondak introduced Jim Bradley to the council.

3. CENTRAL WASATCH COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RALPH BECKER – INTRODUCTION

This item was postponed until later in the meeting.

4. CITIZEN INPUT

Mark Haik commented on the CWC meeting regarding proposed legislation and UDOT's withdrawal from the committee.

Roger Bourke reflected on the value of a LCC capacity study.

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Treasurer's Report
- b. Town Council Meeting minutes for August 14, 2019
- c. Staff Report

MOTION: Council Member Davis moved that the Town Council APPROVE the Consent Agenda. Council Member Morgan seconded the motion.

MOTION: Council Member Bourke moved to amend the proposed minutes draft to remove confusing language on page 2, and to correct the wrong date at the top of the minutes. Mayor Sondak seconded the motion. All were in favor of making the changes and the motion was carried unanimously.

6. QUESTIONS REGARDING DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Mayor Sondak invited UFA Captain West and Chief Russell to present a post-incident report to the Council regarding the recent mud and rock slides in lower LCC. They gave a power point presentation which included dramatic pictures as well as lessons learned from the event.

7. CWC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RALPH BECKER

Mayor Sondak introduced Mr. Ralph Becker. Mr. Becker spoke about CWC involvement in the Cottonwood Canyons Transportation Action Plan (CCTAP) and the current status with an update on language for the proposed Central Wasatch Conservation and Recreation Area Act legislation. He also spoke about his understanding on UDOT's decision to withdraw from the CWC as a consequence of visitor capacity discussions and that CWC was acting as a decision maker. UDOT prefers a true partnership as is the case in the CCTAP. Further UDOT and CWC co-lead that plan. Finally, Mr. Becker outlined efforts to include Alta Ski Lifts Company within the proposed national legislation. He said Alta Ski Area property was not within the current proposed boundary, but that his efforts to include it would continue, though not yet successful.

County Council Member Bradley highlighted that he felt capacity analysis was important, but that it was just not UDOT's "thing," they were in the road building area. However, Mr. Bradley felt that sooner or later the focus would have to be other than cars. Mr. Becker suggested there might be a need for a special state appropriation including possibly Brighton, as a new town, and possibly 20 or so jurisdictions in the Wasatch front and back. He felt CWC was such a forum where all could come together on visitor capacity and perhaps the environmental dashboard could be a baseline for the physical environment. Mr. Bradley interjected that once a consensus was reached, that it should be sent to UDOT because it was their EIS. Mr. Becker suggested that

each jurisdiction pursue what makes sense for them, whether a resolution like that before the Alta council, or otherwise.

8. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Sondak reported the sudden passing of Michael Altman ("Alti") on August 20 at the age of 58.

In addition, he reported on meetings he attended including the UFA, SLCo CRA, SLCo Service Area #3, Dominion Energy, CWC and the upcoming Conference of Mayors meeting on September 26th and Meet the Candidates night on October 17, 2019.

He reported on water and sewer system work because of improperly disposed of grease from commercial users that resulted in odor in wastewater and the need to pump out the "slug" in the sewer line adjacent to the Bay City Tunnel (our water source). He also reported that the infrastructure needs investment and maintenance due to a sag in the sewer line.

In addition, Dominion Energy, the gas utility, was installing covers over 30 meters in Town to better protect them from falling objects, not from snow creep. However, he suggested homeowners can create their own, better solution, so long as the meter is covered, accessible and able to "breathe."

Two temporary dog licenses were issued during the month; a one-day wedding at the Alta Lodge and another for the manager at the Shallow Shaft for several weeks.

Council Member Bourke asked staff about the Snowpine Lodge's lights which shine on the canyon roadway all night as well as the Town's evacuation plans.

9. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING DRAFT RESOLUTION 2019-R-14 RECOMMENDING EVALUATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS FROM INCREASED VISITATION RESULTING FROM UDOT TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS IN LITTLE COTTONWOOD CANYON

Council Member Davis moved to address a resolution that would state the Town's position supporting a LCC, or, an Alta capacity study, either as part of UDOT's EIS process or as a stand-alone study. It was concluded that the resolution would be stronger if it stated a single policy not a different resolution to different entities. Rather, a cover letter to each entity could highlight what is appropriate to that entity receiving the resolution. It was agreed that Nora would have a draft resolution for the Council to consider at October's meeting.

10. DISCUSSION OF DRAFT ZONING ORDINANCE CHANGES

It was agreed to postpone the discussion of the draft zoning ordinance changes due to the late hour, and to schedule a work session at 4:00 PM before the next council meeting.

11. NEW BUSINESS

Council Member Morgan stated that she had witnessed a fatal pedestrian accident in Moab and wanted to remind everyone to slow down, be careful and alert, and applauded traffic calming measures to assist with minimizing traffic dangers.

It was suggested to have a WFRC planning project consultant at next month's meeting to talk about corridor trade-offs, for example should there be sidewalks versus parking spaces.

Council Member Davis stated that she would like to discuss options for community food waste collection/composting with the Council.

12. MOTION TO ADJOURN

MOTION: Council Member Bourke moved to ADJOURN at 6:47 PM. Council Member Morgan seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous consent of the Council.

APPROVED by Alta Town Council on October 16, 2019

Piper Lever, Town Clerk/s