

**MINUTES OF THE
POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS INTERIM COMMITTEE**
Wednesday, May 17, 2000 - 2:00 p.m. - Room 414 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. R. Mont Evans, Senate Chair
Rep. Joseph G. Murray, House Chair
Sen. Pete Suazo
Sen. Michael G. Waddoups
Rep. Eli H. Anderson
Rep. Loretta Baca
Rep. DeMar "Bud" Bowman
Rep. Craig W. Buttars
Rep. Marda Dillree
Rep. David L. Gladwell
Rep. Raymond W. Short
Rep. Richard M. Siddoway

Members Excused:

Sen. Scott N. Howell
Sen. L. Alma "Al" Mansell
Rep. Greg J. Curtis

Members Absent:

Rep. Glenn L. Way

Staff Present:

Mr. Joseph Wade,
Research Analyst
Mr. Robert H. Rees,
Associate General Counsel
Ms. Joy L. Miller,
Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present and a copy of materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

1. **Call to Order** - Sen. Evans called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m.

2. **Legislative Audit - Special Service Districts in Wasatch County** - Ms. Janice Coleman, Legislative Auditor General's Office, stated the audit focused on three special service districts (SSD): Wasatch County, Jordanelle, and Twin Creeks. Overall the auditor found the three districts were not well-controlled or well managed. Consultants signed their own checks over 50 percent of the time and were not chosen in an open process. Ms. Coleman pointed out the county commissioners have made substantial improvements in the areas of fiscal oversight and managerial operations. She said the audit found that commission actions regarding dissolution of the Wasatch County Fire Protection SSD Administrative Control board were legitimate. She said they also found the county's decision to construct the Jordanelle Fire Station while a fire board existed was legitimate. Ms. Coleman indicated the county's overhead charges for employees leased to SSDs appear inaccurate and don't relate well to estimated costs.

Mr. Sam Allen, Wasatch Courier, commented that most of the contracts were signed in private meetings that were not open to the public. Mr. Allen indicated that information requested under GRAMA was never received. He recommended a stronger recall provision be developed.

Mr. Victor Orvis, Wasatch County taxpayer, requested that the information on Wasatch County be exposed, investigated, and a report made.

Mr. Jan Furner, Utah Association of Special Districts, mentioned that the districts in question are dependent districts. Their actions and results are directly promulgated by the county which has ultimate responsibility and authority.

Mr. Gordon Duval, Attorney representing Canyon Meadows Homeowners Association, said it would be appropriate to expand the audit to include the county. There is currently a petition circulating in Wasatch County to provide for an optional form of government that will be on the November 2000 ballot. If it passes, they would request the legislature review SB 58 which could potentially require that the election for commissioners or council members of the new government would not occur until 2002.

Mr. Derek Pullan, Wasatch County Attorney, noted there is pressure by highly funded developers to use SSDs as a financing vehicle. The county is looking at appropriate criteria for the creation of SSDs within that police power. He noted that some items requested by Mr. Allen pertain to pending litigation which violated GRAMA. Mr. Pullan stated the county complies in every detail with the Open and Public Meetings Act.

MOTION: Sen. Suazo moved to approve the minutes of April 19, 2000. The motion passed unanimously. Reps. Short and Siddoway were absent for the vote.

3. Legislative Audit - The '9-1-1' System in Utah - Ms. Maria Stahla, Legislative Auditor General's Office, reported that all 9-1-1 calls are routed to one of 35 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) through the state. Statewide planning or coordinating of the system is necessary to respond to technological advances and is needed to develop a cost recovery mechanism for wireless 9-1-1. She also indicated the 9-1-1 fee collection process needs to be improved. There are currently 38 local authorities that collect the telephone fee from numerous telephone companies. The process could be improved by centralizing the system. Since the Tax Commission already has a centralized system in place to collect the poison control fee from the telephone companies, it is the best alternative to collect the 9-1-1 fee as well.

Mr. Brad Dee, Consolidated Dispatch Committee Chair for Weber County, said he was not sure a state office would improve the 9-1-1 system. He expressed an interest in pursuing the opportunity for the Tax Commission to collect the fee.

Commissioner Burton, Weber County Commission, mentioned that he has reservations about recommendations on distribution of funds that would alter the current formula and offset existing commitments of funding the various centers.

Mr. Terry Ingram, Salt Lake Valley Emergency Communications Center, expressed his concern with how legislation would deal with oversight and transferring funding to them.

Rep. Gladwell pointed out that yesterday the Legislative Management Committee assigned this study to the Government Operations Interim Committee.

4. UTA Accountability - Mr. Mike Riordan, Citizens Against Light Rail, indicated many former mass transit riders have lost their bus service as a result of the north/south light rail. In order to attract people to mass transit, bus service must be improved.

Mr. Bill Barton introduced some individuals who wanted to address this issue.

Mr. Drew Chamberlain, Chairman, Coalition for Accountable Government, indicated that he applied for six GRAMA requests, three of which were denied. He distributed several handouts concerning UTA. UTA is not willing to competitively contract certain services which would save a tremendous amount of money. He questioned the ridership figures given by UTA and stated salaries of UTA officials are out of line. He requested that the committee form a commission to reign in UTA in an effort to stop the inefficiency and waste.

Mr. Kenneth Olofson, Coalition for Accountable Government, recommended the committee abolish the Wasatch Front Regional Council and bring the planning process into the Department of Transportation which would report to the legislative Transportation Committee and legislative appropriations. He also recommended legislation be drafted which would put all monopoly services under the scrutiny and authority of the Public Service Commission.

Mr. John Webb, United Electric, said it is unconscionable for the legislature to allow UTA to continue to build infrastructure which will be operated in perpetuity by a sales tax before the sales tax is approved by the people. East/West light rail construction is scheduled to begin soon and business and property owners on 4th South have not yet been told how much their property will be affected. He distributed a copy of his testimony before the Congressional House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee.

Mr. John English, UTA, distributed a handout of general information on UTA. UTA was established under the Utah Transit District Act of 1969 to provide a public mass transportation system for Utah communities. In the early 1970s several referendums were held, partly to organize the UTA into a regional transit authority and to finally fund it through a 1/4 of 1 percent sales tax. Mr. English stated UTA has 1,500 employees with an annual operating budget close to \$90 million. With the success of the north/south light rail ridership has increased an additional 20,000. As service was restructured, they have lost some customers. However, they have gained far more than they have lost. Mr. English said they follow the law with regard to GRAMA requests. UTA holds hundreds of public hearings a year.

Mr. Bob Jones, commuter, distributed a copy of UTA bus and TRAX schedules. With the establishment of TRAX, his commute time has increased. He proposed that some type of

commuters' association be established to hear the views of the commuters.

Mr. Stephen Barthel, Riverton, commented that Surveys done on TRAX do not accurately reflect the southwest end of the valley. Prior to losing their express route, a petition was submitted to keep the route. Correspondence was sent to UTA but was never answered.

Mr. Conrad Lloyd, taxpayer, stated he would like to know the total amount of money collected from the fare box and prepaid passes for the month of April of 1999 versus April 2000. Even though ridership may have increased, he suspects people are being counted multiple times.

Chair Evans turned the chair over to Chair Murray.

5. Consolidation of Fire Services - Mr. Ken Budge, firefighters' union, pointed out that the professional firefighters do not believe anyone should be forced into a consolidation situation. He said they would like to see a better and more efficient system without the infighting. Consolidating agencies may mean giving up some local control. Many areas across the nation have started an independent fire district with an elected fire commissioner and a fire council with representatives from each district. He noted that initially consolidation may not be cheaper, however, it would stop jurisdictional problems.

Mr. Dave Spatafore, Utah League of Cities and Towns, said at its monthly meeting, the league received little or no offer of support for even discussing the issue at the legislative level from any elected officials within or outside of Salt Lake County. It is an issue that can be addressed by interlocal agreement between communities.

Mr. Jake Nielson, West Jordan Fire Chief, indicated he is chairman of the Salt Lake Valley Fire Alliance which is an organization consisting of all fire chiefs in the valley. He noted the alliance has been in existence for only a few months but they have implemented an automatic aid system in which the closest, most appropriate unit will respond to the public's needs. The formation of a consolidated district through legislation at this point in time is not a good idea.

Mr. Don Berry, Salt Lake County Fire Chief, expressed his confidence that the fire chiefs of the valley could make great strides towards fixing the problem.

Mr. Don Jason, Sandy City Fire Department Chief, explained the impetus to begin the alliance came from the fire chiefs.

MOTION: Rep. Dillree moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Murray adjourned the meeting at 4:50 p.m.