

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
February 2, 2004
Room 305, State Capitol**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Thomas Hatch, Co-Chair
Rep. David Ure, Co-Chair
Sen. Parley Hellewell
Rep. Craig W. Buttars
Rep. Carl W. Duckworth
Rep. Ben C. Ferry
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. Michael Noel
Rep. Darin G. Peterson
Rep. Michael R. Styler
Rep. R. Curt Webb

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sen. Ron Allen

STAFF: Steven Allred, Fiscal Analyst
Cindy Hopkin, Committee Secretary

SPEAKERS: Courtland Nelson, Director, Parks and Recreation
Stephen Ogilvie, Finance Manager, Parks and Recreation
Mary Tullius, Deputy Director for Administration
Gordon Topham, Deputy Director for Operations

Note: A list of visitors and a copy of handouts are filed with the committee minutes.

Rep. Ure called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

MOTION: Sen. Hellewell moved to approve the minutes of January 29, 2004. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Hatch, Sen. Allen, Rep. Buttars, Rep. Ferry, and Rep. Noel absent for the vote.

Mr. Nelson commented regarding his acceptance of the State Parks and Recreation Director job in Minnesota and stated that it has been an honor to work with the committee and he has always appreciated the way the committee has treated him and allowed him to have a fair chance to speak. He feels that there is a healthy legislative process in Utah and suggested that Utah keep the length of the legislative sessions the same.

Randon Wilson, President of the Board for This Is The Place Foundation, requested that the committee raise the budget for This Is The Place Heritage Park from \$700,000 back to \$800,000 as it was originally. The park has constructed about 50 buildings from Centennial Funds and

private donations. These buildings allow them to put on programs and encourage visitors.

It has been suggested that land across Sunnyside Avenue, from the Zoo and part of This Is The Place Park could be made available to help alleviate Hogle Zoo's space problems. This joint development would create a third feature with different attractions than currently in the Zoo or Park. The exotic animals would remain at Hogle Zoo, but the animals that are indigenous to this area would be sited adjoining This Is The Place attractions such as a pioneer encampment, a Native American encampment and a mountain man feature. He requested the committee consider a one-time appropriation of \$50,000 of the \$400,000 needed to fund these additions to This Is The Place Heritage Park and Hogle Zoo.

Matthew Godfrey, Mayor of Ogden, expressed his appreciation to the committee for its support of the Trails Grants program. He spoke about the clean up program in Ogden, especially the rivers that run through the downtown area. He stated that the Centennial Trail project is helping create more job interest and business activity downtown, it helps make Ogden's neighborhoods more valuable and desirable and also helps tourism. Mr. Godfrey requested the committee aid him in securing more trails funding.

Dan McArthur, Mayor of St. George, spoke about the importance of Washington County and St. George non-motorized trails and desert habitat. Mr. McArthur urged the committee, as the economy rebounds, to start putting money back into the funding for non-motorized trails.

Mr. Ogilvie spoke about the division's revenue situation. The Division of Parks and Recreation has been directed by the Legislature over the last few years to find sources of revenue other than the General Fund or direct tax payer fund, which they have done. The parks are not able to generate enough money on their own to operate without assistance. The park's fees have been increased the last couple of years as per the Legislature's direction. Now the amount of increased revenue the division receives from fee increases is beginning to go down. From an economic standpoint, when the fees reach a certain point, people are no longer willing to pay them.

Ms. Tullius reported that there is a new Special Fun Tag that is provided free to individuals and veterans with qualifying disabilities. Seniors who prove Utah residency can purchase a new \$35 "Senior Adventure Annual Pass" which is a 50 percent discount on the regular pass or they can choose to pay 55 percent of the day use fee as they go into the park with proof of Utah residency. To date, the division has issued 909 Special Fun Tags and has sold 1,010 Senior Adventure Annual Passes. The Parks and Recreation Division has made \$35,000 on Senior Adventure Passes since the first of this year.

Mr. Topham stated that Park and Recreations Operations has 189 cooperative agreements to provide services for concessions. He also reported that there are three new parks coming on line: the Field House of Natural History in Vernal, Soldier Hollow Golf Course in Midway and Sand Hollow State Park in Washington County.

Rep. Peterson had questions regarding possible competition between Soldier Hollow Golf Course and other golf courses in the area. Steve Roberts, State Parks, stated that a task force for planning did a feasibility study which showed that there is a need for more golf courses in the area so there wouldn't be competition between the private and public golf courses.

Mr. Allred summarized the Parks and Recreation budget "hot spot" items (Tab 10 and Tab 11). There are six divisions that are involved in the transfer of one employee from the DNR payroll to the AG payroll. Mr. Allred recommends the Legislature approve that Parks and Recreation, along with the other five divisions, transfer \$6,800.

The two new 18-hole golf courses at Soldier Hollow, for which the state issued revenue bonds totaling \$12M, will open at the beginning of FY 2005. The first bond payment will also be due in FY 2005. Dedicated Credits of \$115,000 come from a statutory "user fee" of \$1.50 per nine holes of golf. Restricted General Fund estimated revenues of \$1,237,200 will come from all other collections such as green fees and golf cart fees.

Mr. Allred recommended a total Park Operations budget of \$18,055,300; 25 percent of which comes from General Fund.

A 26 percent decrease in park visitation between FY 2000 and FY 2003 is attributed to park closures, the economy, 9/11, low water levels, resistance to fee increases, news media coverage of drought, and statewide fire restrictions.

The Parks Board has the authority to set and change park fees. Page 22 of Tab 10 shows the fees the board has adopted. Page 24 shows the new fees at Wasatch Mountain and Soldier Hollow.

There are no personal service costs in the Parks and Recreation Capital Budget (Tab 11). There is a small amount that goes for Capital improvements to parks but most of this is pass-through funding to other entities.

The Facilities Acquisition and Development program is the only place where there is funding going to parks and sales for capital developments with a budget of \$64,200 in General Funds which used to be \$105,000. State park fees add another \$50,000 which totals \$114,200 for land acquisitions, small facility development, and working with DFCM.

Mr. Allred recommended discontinuing the intent language on page 5 since construction of the Soldier Hollow golf course is complete.

The Ten Million Dollar Capitol Improvement Program has been renamed Five Million since the Governor withheld \$5M due to revenue shortfalls. The division has spent \$4,441,600 and has projects in progress totaling \$558,500.

The Riverway Enhancement Grants program used to have a budget of \$425,000 and now is down

to \$0. Mr. Allred recommended no appropriation for this program. At the end of the 2003 General Session the Legislature left \$15,000 in this program and \$15,000 in the Trails Grants program. Mr. Allred recommended moving the \$15,000 from this program into the Trails Grants program.

Page 8 has a list showing matching grants to which funds are obligated. During the 2003 General Session the total obligated amount was \$749,200. Page 10 shows where the funds from trails grants are obligated. This amount has declined from \$1,039,400 last year to \$674,000 for this year.

MOTION: Sen. Hatch moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 p.m. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Allen and Rep. Styler absent for the vote.

Rep. David Ure, Co-Chairman

Sen. Thomas Hatch, Co-Chairman