

MINUTES
ALTA TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday, August 14, 2024, 4:00 PM
Alta Community Center, 10351 E. Highway 210, Alta, Utah

ALTA TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

PRESENT: Mayor Roger Bourke
Councilmember Carolyn Anctil (attended virtually)
Councilmember John Byrne
Councilmember Elise Morgan (attended virtually)
Councilmember Dan Schilling (attended virtually)

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Cawley, Town Manager
Mike Morey, Town Marshal
Jen Clancy, Town Clerk (attended virtually)

ALSO PRESENT: Cameron Platt, Legal Counsel
Craig Heimark, Treasurer

NOT PRESENT: Molly Austin, Deputy Town Clerk

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

00:00:00

Mayor Bourke called the August 14th, 2024 Alta Town Council meeting to order.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

00:00:40

Kody Fox, the Executive Director of Friends of Alta, announced an upcoming speaker series event. The event, scheduled for that evening at Our Lady of the Snows, would feature Dr. William Anderegg from the University of Utah, who is a noted expert on mountain forests and climate change. The event was free, with doors opening at 6:45 PM and the program running from 7:00 to 8:00 PM. Fox encouraged attendance, highlighting the opportunity to learn and ask questions.

Zach Robinson introduced himself as a candidate running for Salt Lake County Council. They attended the meeting to make a personal introduction and connect with the community, acknowledging that some attendees might have received their emails. Robinson planned to observe and listen during the meeting, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to introduce themselves.

3. CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION UPDATE ON VISITOR-USE STUDY, LINDSEY NIELSEN

00:03:00

Lindsey Nielsen, the Director of the Central Wasatch Commission, introduced themselves and their colleague Sam Kilpack, who handles operations. They presented an update to the Central Wasatch Commission's visitor use study, which had been initially released in October 2023. This study, conducted by Utah State University, focused on visitation data from Little Cottonwood Canyon, Big Cottonwood Canyon, and Millcreek Canyon between September 2021 and October 2022. Nielsen explained that the updated report corrected a data weighting issue from the original study, which had significantly underestimated visitation numbers for day-use sites like ski resorts and picnic areas. The updated report aimed to more accurately reflect actual visitation.

Council members had various questions and comments:

- John Byrne expressed confidence in the updated numbers, appreciating the clarification provided.
- Carolyn Anctil questioned whether the COVID-19 pandemic might have skewed the data from the 2021-2022 period. Nielsen acknowledged this concern and mentioned that the Commission might consider updating the data more frequently to reflect current conditions.
- Byrne inquired about understanding trends and the utility of the data. Nielsen responded that the study provided a snapshot rather than long-term trends and acknowledged that others too had expressed a desire for more interpretive analysis on the dashboard, it would be up to the Commission to decide if they would address that request.
- Dan Schilling noted that users' satisfaction with congestion appeared to differ depending on if you were a regular canyon traveler (more frustrated) as opposed to the general population.

Nielsen concluded by inviting further questions and highlighting the availability of the report on the Commission's website.

4. ALTA SKI AREA UPDATE, MIKE MAUGHAN

00:20:30

Mike Maughan provided updates on several projects and operations at Alta Ski Area. Maughan reported that the Sugarloaf patrol building was progressing well and was expected to be completed by mid-September. The retaining wall at Alf's was under repair, with the collapsed section removed and a new base established. Maughan said the regrading work on the Mambo Bowls and Ballroom Traverse was nearing completion, with the focus shifting to revegetation. Additionally, work on the High Traverse was scheduled to wrap up by the end of the week, and initial work had begun on the Albion Base conveyors.

Regarding sales and product trends, Maughan reported sales for the upcoming season remained relatively flat compared to the previous year. IKON reported a 2% increase in sales overall and a 6% increase in Utah, with a noticeable shift from more expensive to less expensive products. Maughan indicated this is what Alta is observing with their products as well.

Maughan also responded to council inquiries about the current status of the Supreme Lift. Maughan said that an environmental assessment for the Supreme Lift had been conducted to identify wetlands

and sensitive plant species. This data would be reviewed by the lift manufacturer, and the project would proceed through the Forest Service approval process. Maughan informed the council they were replacing all the chair pans and anything of concern and that the lift planned to be operational for the next season.

Maughan added that plans were underway for a water project related to snowmaking for the next summer, and discussions with the Town of Alta about parking and future contracts with Interstate Parking were anticipated. Maughan mentioned that 14,000 plants, including various species, were being planted this year, with an employee planting day scheduled for the following day.

5. QUESTIONS REGARDING DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

00:27:30

Mayor Bourke asked Jay Torgersen to provide details on a recent fire near a mountaintop in the area. Torgersen, who was not on duty during the incident, deferred to Brian Pickett for the immediate details. Pickett explained that the fire, which occurred two days prior, had been reported as a lightning strike that ignited a small, confined fire on Forest Service property. Despite the initial concern, the fire did not spread quickly due to rain accompanying the lightning. The wildland division was activated, and state resources were notified. By the time crews arrived, the fire was mostly extinguished, and no significant damage was visible.

Torgersen added that such fires are common with lightning strikes and can smolder even when it is raining. The Northern Utah Interagency Fire Center (NUIFC) coordinates wildland fire responses, utilizing various resources like UFA, the State Department of Forestry, and the Forest Service. Torgersen described the decision-making process for fire management, including factors like fuel moisture and risk levels. Although the recent rainfall had reduced fire risk temporarily, fire restrictions would remain in place.

Torgersen provided a reminder for chipper days on September 16th and 17th, CPR training on September 19th.

Byrne acknowledged the detailed and interesting nature of the report but raised a concern regarding the water and sewer master plan. Byrne noted that the current report did not mention fire system improvements and wanted assurance that the upcoming study would address fire system questions along with culinary water issues to avoid the need for a separate study in the future. Byrne emphasized the importance of ensuring that there is sufficient water supply for catastrophic fire events in the canyons.

Chris Cawley confirmed that a major focus of the project is to update the 2014 capital improvement program, specifically aimed at improving fire flows. Cawley assured Byrne that this was on the radar and emphasized that the study would include an assessment of fire flows and reserves as part of the water system review.

Mayor Bourke agreed with Byrne's concern, noting that it is crucial to address natural hazards such as fire risk in the canyons.

6. **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: JULY 10, 2024, MEETING MINUTES, STAFF AND FINANCE REPORTS**

00:41:00

MOTION: Mayor Bourke motioned to approve the July 10, 2024 town council meeting minutes. John Byrne seconded.

VOTE: All were in favor. The June 20, 2024 meeting minutes, and staff and finance reports were approved.

RESULT: APPROVED

MOTION: John Byrne motioned to approve the finance reports. Mayor Bourke seconded.

VOTE: All were in favor. The finance reports were unanimously approved.

RESULT: APPROVED

7. **MAYORS REPORT**

00:43:00

Mayor Bourke began the report with some good news: a contract was submitted to the UTA Board of Trustees for their approval, which would effectively restore the 953 bus line for the upcoming winter. The new service, provided by a private enterprise, would feature four buses running from the Midvale TRAX station through various stops in the canyon to Goldminer's Daughter, with return service in the evening. Additionally, a mid-day service would start from 6200 Park and Ride. UTA will also partner with the Town for the local shuttle, offering financial support.

Moving on to the astronomy report, Mayor Bourke highlighted the 47th anniversary of the launch of two spacecraft to the outer planets. This mission, known as the Grand Tour but now called Voyager, took advantage of a rare alignment of Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune discovered by a young Caltech grad student and part time JPL employee, Gary Flandro. Despite initial skepticism and significant challenges, the Voyager mission was successful and continues to operate and transmit data after 47 years. The distance to these spacecraft is difficult to comprehend but can be appreciated from the fact that radio signals from Voyager 1 take over 22 hours to reach Earth while light from the sun, traveling at the same speed takes over 8 minutes.

Mayor Bourke reported that on July 18, Alta hosted two meetings: a Council of Governments meeting focused on planning for the unhoused this winter, and a more informal Council of Mayors meeting in the town park. The latter aimed to remind community leaders of the area's natural beauty and the importance of preserving it amidst growing pressures for change. The event included a hike along Barb's Trail. Mayor Bourke commented that a highlight was a young bull moose's appearance. Special thanks were given to volunteers Tom Schneider, UDOT's Steven Clark, and Margaret Bourke for their contributions.

Mayor Bourke reported that in other news, an election would be coming up in three months. Mayor Bourke reminded residents that registered voters in Alta will receive a mail-in ballot around mid-October. Even though the town election is scheduled for next year, interested citizens are encouraged to consider running for local offices. Mayor Bourke emphasized the value of competitive elections and civic engagement.

Lastly, Mayor Bourke noted that the Superior hiking closure, which had been affecting the area, has been lifted as the project is ahead of schedule. The installation of towers will commence around late August or early September, with temporary closures expected during that time.

8. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE 2024-O-7 ESTABLISHING THE TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE**

00:55:00

Mayor Bourke and the councilmembers discussed their availability for the September 11th meeting. Byrne expressed approval of setting the meeting schedule by ordinance and highlighted the town's commitment to compliance with state codes and acknowledged the situation as a minor oversight.

MOTION: Mayor Bourke motioned to adopt ordinance 2024-O-7 establishing the Town Council meeting schedule. John Byrne seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Mayor Bourke – yes, John Byrne – yes, Elise Morgan – yes, Carolyn Anctil – yes, Dan Schilling – yes, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT: APPROVED

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

01:01:10

No new business

10. **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

01:01:20

MOTION: John Byrne motioned to adjourn, and Dan Schilling seconded.

VOTE: All in favor. The meeting was unanimously adjourned.

RESULT: APPROVED

Passed this 11th day of September, 2024


Jen Clancy, Town Clerk