

Cache County Form of Government Study Committee
Meeting Minutes - June 19, 2025

Time: 5:00 PM – 6:36 PM (MDT)

Place: Cache County Council Chambers (199 N Main St., Logan, UT, 84321)

Present Persons Other than Committee Members/Staff:

- Bryson Behm (Cache County Clerk)
 - Dr. Damon Cann (USU Political Science Department Chair & Professor)
 - Micah Safsten (Private Citizen)
 - David Zook (Cache County Executive)
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1. Call to Order (0:00)

The meeting of the Form of Government Study Committee was called to order at 5:00 PM on June 19, 2025, by Cache County Executive David Zook. Mr. Zook welcomed the committee members and thanked them for their service.

2. Roll Call and Introduction of Committee Members (1:10)

The following Committee members were present:

- Mayor Ed Buist (Mayor of Mendon City)
 - Mayor Bryan Cox (Mayor of Hyde Park City)
 - Jack Draxler (Citizen of North Logan)
 - Jordan Mathis (Director of Bear River Health Department)
 - Blake Wright (Mayor of River Heights)
- Andrew Erickson, Policy Analyst for the Cache County Council, was also present as the assigned staff member for the Committee. Andrew Erickson was later deputized as Committee Secretary.

3. Election of Chair and Other Necessary Officers (2:00)

- **Election of Chair:**
 - David Zook opened the floor for nominations for Chair.
 - Mayor Buist nominated Jeff Draxler (presumably Jack Draxler, as per roll call) for Chair.
 - No other nominations were made.
 - Mayor Buist made a motion, seconded by Mayor Cox, to ratify the nomination.
 - The motion passed unanimously. Jack Draxler (referred to as Jack Draxler in the transcript from this point) was elected Chair.
- **Election of Vice Chair:**
 - A discussion was held regarding the election of a Vice Chair.
 - Mayor Buist nominated Mayor Blake Wright for Vice Chair.
 - Mayor Cox nominated Jordan Mathis for Vice Chair.
 - The nomination for Jordan Mathis was seconded by Mayor Buist.
 - No other nominations were made.
 - The motion to elect Jordan Mathis as Vice Chair passed unanimously.

4. Approval of the Agenda (4:52)

Jack Draxler called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mayor Cox made the motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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5. Deputization of Assigned Staff Member as Committee Secretary (5:11)

Jack Draxler introduced Andrew Erickson and asked him to introduce himself. Andrew Erickson explained his role as the assigned staff member and that his deputization as Committee Secretary was optional. Jack Draxler motioned to appoint Andrew Erickson as the Committee Secretary. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. Formal Adoption of Parliamentary Authority for Committee Operations (7:41)

Jack Draxler suggested adopting Robert's Rules of Order. Mayor Buist made a motion to adopt the most recent version of Robert's Rules of Order. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

7. Study Committee Overview (8:53)

- **Purpose and Mandate:**

- Andrew Erickson invited Dr. Damon Cann from USU to present information regarding the study committee.
- Dr. Cann explained that his role was to be an independent academic assessor of the situation, to share his understanding of the facts, and to help set boundaries and parameters. He clarified that local governments exist because the state created them and prescribes the process and available forms of government. The committee is charged with studying and comparing Cache County's current form of government with other legally permissible forms to identify if changes could improve governance.
- Dr. Cann stated that the group has the responsibility to do public outreach to disseminate information, educate the public on available options, and receive feedback to stimulate dialogue and discussion.
- He also explained that the committee is obligated to prepare a written report and recommendations based on its research and public opinion feedback, and to provide it to the county council within a year of the first meeting.
- Dr. Cann mentioned the opportunity to propose an optional plan if choosing an expanded commission form of government, allowing choices such as the number of commissioners and whether they are elected from districts or at large. Jack Draxler clarified that they do not have to propose a new option. Dr. Cann responded that they will not propose a new option, but if they choose a form with permissible options, they must choose among them.
- Mayor Cox asked about the report if no change is recommended. Dr. Cann affirmed that even if the status quo is chosen, a report with rationale is still required. Mayor Cox clarified that the committee is recommending, not choosing, the form of government. Dr. Cann confirmed this, stating that any recommended change would go to the council and then be placed on the ballot for ratification by Cache County voters.
- Dr. Cann added that the committee has the opportunity to make additional recommendations to improve local government efficiency and economy.
- Mayor Buist noted that the letter he received indicated a filing period for county executive in February 2026, which is shorter than a year. The County Clerk stated that for a referendum to be on the ballot by November 2026, it needs to be ready by the end of August 2026. Andrew Erickson clarified that an optional plan would include a transition timeline, so it doesn't necessarily have to be 2029 for implementation.

- **Powers:**

- Andrew Erickson explained that state law allows the committee to adopt its own rules for operation and organization.
- He stated that the committee can request assistance and advice from officers or employees of any state or local government agency.
- Andrew Erickson noted that the committee can fill vacancies in its membership.

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- He also indicated that the committee can establish advisory boards or committees, which may include individuals who are not committee members.
- Andrew Erickson added that if a change is recommended, the committee can conduct additional public hearings after filing the report to alter it.
- Lastly, he mentioned that the committee can direct its assigned staff member (himself) to assist with any committee-related matter.
- **Limitations:**
 - Andrew Erickson stated that committee members may not receive compensation for their service, but can be reimbursed for certain expenses.
 - He clarified that members cannot hold an elected county office or have filed a current Declaration of Candidacy for an elected county office.
 - Andrew Erickson explained that the committee cannot alter the report or proposed optional plan to recommend a different optional plan from the originally proposed once it has legal approval.
 - He also noted that once a proposed optional plan is set for an election, no further alterations can be made within 160 days of that election.
 - Andrew Erickson stated that state law expressly forbids any county council member from interfering with the committee's operations to ensure independent and unbiased work.
 - Dr. Damon Cann reminded the committee that the Open and Public Meetings Act (OPMA) still applies, meaning a quorum of members cannot meet outside authorized meetings.
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Andrew Erickson reiterated that the committee is to actively study the current form of government and compare it with other available forms.
 - He added that they are to determine improvements by critically assessing whether a change could strengthen local government administration in terms of responsiveness, accountability, economy, and efficiency.
 - Andrew Erickson also stated that the committee is supposed to actively participate in holding public hearings and community forums to gather input and stimulate discussion.
 - He said the committee is to ensure timely reporting by filing the written report within one year of the first meeting.
 - Andrew Erickson mentioned that if a change is recommended, the committee is to work on and complete a detailed draft of a proposed optional plan.
 - He concluded that the committee is to ensure all meetings are open to the public.
- **Resources:**
 - Andrew Erickson stated that the Cache County Council is responsible for covering all applicable expenses and the cost of professional services incurred by the study committee, including public meetings, procurement of materials, and expert consultations.
 - He noted that he is available as the primary point of contact to facilitate the committee's work and provide administrative and research support.
 - Andrew Erickson also stated that he can coordinate efforts for creating and maintaining a dedicated webpage on the Cache County website and assist in drafting committee bylaws, the final report, or other necessary documents. He emphasized his neutral role as a facilitator.

8. Actions Suggested By Staff (58:30)

- **Adopting a Calendar and Decision Date:** Andrew Erickson advised the committee to consider and digest this, stating that a solid date did not need to be set immediately.
- **Consider Establishing Subsidiary Committees:** Andrew Erickson recommended three potential subcommittees: a research and analysis subcommittee, a public outreach and engagement subcommittee, and a planned

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development and legal review subcommittee (if a new form of government is proposed). Mayor Buist suggested evaluating the need for subcommittees as they proceed. Bryan Cox agreed that some subcommittees would be necessary once public outreach is determined. Jack Draxler agreed that they don't need to designate subcommittees now, but can do so as needed.

- **Assigning Staff to Procure Study Materials and Research External Legal and Consulting Professionals:** Jack Draxler noted that Andrew Erickson had already been asked to do this with regard to previous committees in the state. Mayor Buist made a motion to request any and all studies that have previously taken place in any county within the state of Utah pertaining to the study of forms of government, their findings, and the reasons why, limiting it to no more than 20 years and no more than four studies. The motion was seconded and passed.
- **Assigning Staff to Coordinate on Creating a Webpage for the Committee on the County Website:** Andrew Erickson mentioned a webpage already exists, but could be expanded for public engagement. The committee decided not to actively pursue this immediately.
- **Assigning Staff to Draft Study Committee Bylaws:** Andrew Erickson suggested he could draft bylaws. The committee generally agreed to operate under Robert's Rules of Order for now.

9. Scheduling Future Meeting(s) (1:04:00)

Jack Draxler stated the need to set a time and date for the next meeting. Mayor Buist suggested meeting within two weeks. The next meeting was set for Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at 3:00 PM.

10. Other Business (1:13:25)

- Bryan Cox inquired about the "why" behind the committee's formation and what problem they are trying to solve, suggesting the county council should provide this information. Andrew Erickson agreed that there is likely motivation behind it and suggested exploring communications with current and former county employees and officials.
- Mayor Buist asked if individual committee members could meet with county officials (e.g., Executive Zook, county council members) to gather their opinions on what works and doesn't work with the current form of government, and also with officials from other counties like Box Elder County. Dr. Damon Cann confirmed that individual meetings are within the scope of their ability and are part of their charge, and that getting opinions from sitting and former executives and council members would be wise. He also recommended getting an advisory opinion from the county attorney on this matter.
- A committee member expressed concern about multiple members contacting the same officials. Mayor Buist countered that for all members to do it, they would likely need to come to a meeting.
- A committee member suggested developing a benchmarking tool to eliminate bias when gathering information. Bryan Cox also expressed concern about different interpretations of information if not standardized.
- Mayor Buist requested minutes from the County Council's discussions leading to the committee's approval to understand their rationale. Andrew Erickson confirmed this would be an appropriate request and he could obtain them.
- Bryan Cox asked if the Utah Association of Counties (UAC) had information on forms of government. Andrew Erickson stated he had reached out to UAC but they were hesitant to get too involved due to the political nature of the topic.
- A committee member suggested inviting Gavin Anderson from UAC to the next meeting to outline how each of the four forms of government functions. Andrew Erickson agreed to send the invitation and will provide a copy of the relevant section of the manual he has from UAC.
- Jack Draxler emphasized understanding how each form functions before discussing which is best for Cache County. Mayor Buist suggested creating a standard set of questions (two specific questions were mentioned) for talking to officials in different forms of government.

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- Andrew Erickson summarized the committee's mandate, the multi-stage process involving public engagement and legal review, and his support role.

11. Adjournment (1:36:06)

A motion to adjourn was made and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:36 PM.

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NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING SET FOR: Same location on Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at 3:00 PM.

Approved on 06-25-2025