

Cache County Form of Government Study
Committee Meeting Minutes – October 23, 2025
DRAFT

Time: 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM (MDT)

Place: Smithfield City Council Chambers (96 S Main St, Smithfield, UT 84335)

Present Committee Members/Staff:

- Jack Draxler (Chair)
 - Bryan Cox
 - Jordan Mathis (Vice Chair)
 - Blake Wright
 - Ed Buist
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- Dr. Damon Cann, Committee Consultant, was present.
 - Andrew Erickson, Committee Secretary, was present.

Excused Committee Members/Staff:

Others Present: Micah Safsten, Val Potter, Nancy Potter, Shawn Milne, as well as several unnamed members of the public, and other members of the public.

1. Call to Order and Introductions (0:00)

Chair Jack Draxler called the public forum to order. He introduced himself as the Chair, former state legislator, and former mayor of North Logan. He stated the purpose was to discuss the four forms of county government and receive public input. Committee members introduced themselves by name and public service role.

2. Committee Mandate (0:57)

Jack Draxler explained the committee's formation was enabled by House Bill 356 from the last legislative session. He noted the committee's charge is to evaluate and study the forms of county government outlined in the Constitution and make recommendations to the County Council. Dr. Damon Cann and Andrew Erickson were thanked for their assistance.

3. Presentation of the Four Forms of Government (2:21)

Dr. Damon Cann and Andrew Erickson presented the four forms of county government allowed under Utah law:

- County Commission (Traditional Three-Member): Three full-time elected officials vest all legislative and most executive powers. Used by approximately 20 counties in Utah, regardless of size.
- Expanded County Commission: Legislative and executive powers are fused in a single commission with a larger number (five or seven) of part-time commissioners. Used by two counties: Morgan and Grand.

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- Council Executive: Legislative power is held by a part-time Council, and executive power is held by a separately elected County Executive, who has veto power. Cache County has used this form since its implementation in 1987. Used by Cache and Salt Lake Counties.
- Council Manager: Legislative power is held by a part-time Council, and executive power is held by a Council-appointed County Manager, who can be dismissed by the Council and does not have veto power.

Note on Cost (26:36): Dr. Cann reported that an analysis of salary and benefit costs in similarly sized counties showed minimal differences across all four forms, concluding that the form of government is less consequential to the budget than the values of the elected officials.

4. Public Comment Period (40:42)

The floor was opened for public comment to identify common threads and preferences among the four forms:

- Preference for Council Executive (Form 3):
 - Someone supported Form 3, citing the separation of powers and the elected executive as providing more popular control.
 - Micah Safsten, a resident of Logan and former County employee, shared his perspective that the current form's separation of powers is desirable. He argued that tensions between the executive and legislative branches arose when the *de jure* separation became *de facto* (in practice), and advised against returning to a fused system.
 - Someone and Nancy Potter both cautioned that an appointed manager (Form 4) could favor the council's wishes, potentially removing necessary checks and balances, while an elected executive is directly accountable to voters.
 - Val Potter (former County Council member) argued that the current system's check and balance has worked for four decades and that giving administrative decisions to a part-time council would be detrimental.
 - Someone explicitly stated a preference to remain with the current form, favoring separation and an elected executive.
 - Someone felt local government should mirror the federal constitutional separation of executive and legislative branches.
- Council Size and Structure:
 - Someone suggested that three legislative members is too few, but nine is too many, noting that seven can be time-consuming.
 - Shawn Milne (former Tooele County Commissioner) noted that disagreements are natural and emphasized the importance of public engagement and electing capable individuals. He preferred a mix of at-large and districted council members, if a change were made, to avoid "tribalism."

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5. Committee Process and Next Steps (1:16:13)

Dr. Damon Cann clarified that if the committee recommends a change in form of government, the County Council votes on whether to forward that recommendation to the voters; they cannot amend the recommended form or optional plan.

Someone asked if the Council could make the executive a part-time position, to which Dr. Cann and Jack Draxler clarified that the state statute currently mandates the executive be full-time, though the salary (and thus de facto hours) is set by the Council.

Survey (1:23:16): Attendees were directed to a QR code to take the public survey, with the Chair noting the committee values the quality of the comments received.

6. Adjournment (1:29:15)

The Chair thanked the attendees for the quality comments and participation. The meeting was adjourned.