

## Cache County Form of Government Study

### Committee Meeting Minutes – November 5, 2025

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**Date:** Tuesday, November 5, 2025

**Time:** 7:00-8:30 PM (Approx.)

**Place:** County Council Chambers located at 199 N Main St, Logan, UT, 84321

#### **Attendees**

#### **Present Committee Members/Staff**

- Jack Draxler, Chair
- Jordan Mathis, Vice Chair (online)
- Ed Buist, Committee Member
- Blake Wright, Committee Member
- Brian Cox, Committee Member (joined later online)
- Dr. Damon Cann, Committee Consultant
- Andrew Erickson, Committee Secretary

#### **Absent/Excused Committee Members:**

- Brian Cox, Committee Member (excused initially, later joined online)

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#### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Jack Draxler at approximately 0:12. He noted it was a regular meeting with a full agenda.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

- Jack Draxler opened the floor for review and approval of prior minutes, noting they had been sent out.
- Blake Wright mentioned glancing through the open house minutes and had no comments on the October 1 minutes, if he had reviewed them.

☒ **Motion:** Blake Wright moved to approve the minutes from October 1, September 25, October 16, and October 23.

- Second: Jack Draxler seconded the motion.
- Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Review Committee Timeline and Progress (2:10)**

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- Jack Draxler stated the committee would quickly review Items three and four to see if Dr. Cann or Andrew Erickson had further insights.
- Andrew Erickson reported that the in-depth study and outreach phase is concluding. The committee is now entering the phase of discussion, debate, and decision/recommendation, followed by writing the final report.

#### **Discussion of Insights and of a Final Recommendation of the Committee**

- Blake Wright asked if the committee was still targeting the end of November for the timeline.
- Jordan Mathis's thoughts aligned with Blake Wright's question. He asked the committee if they felt prepared for the November 19 meeting to formally present their individual positions, have a discussion, and potentially move towards a joint recommendation.
- Jack Draxler noted the deliberation needed and clarified the process as two-pronged: a recommendation on the form of county government, and any potential recommendations on policies and procedures.
- Blake Wright agreed and suspected they could reach a form of government recommendation quickly, but noted work might be needed on optional plan elements.
- Ed Buist mentioned that Brian Cox had communicated that he felt ready to decide and offer suggestions for better performance.
- Ed Buist shared that he was also inclined to feel ready to decide and mentioned he would likely not be present for the November 19 meeting due to a prior engagement. He indicated he was prepared to offer his basic position and a couple of recommendations that evening.

#### **Information Gathering from Dr. Damon Cann (7:14)**

Dr. Damon Cann provided a brief summary of research results, starting with the citizen survey.

##### **Citizen Survey Summary**

- The survey received 40 responses across three events, showing some heterogeneity but common threads.
- Citizens strongly favored geographic districts.
- The most diverse range of opinions was on part-time versus full-time elected officials.
- The current form of government (Council Executive) was most popular among attendees at the Hyrum and Smithfield meetings.
- The Council Manager form was most popular at the Logan meeting.

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- When pooling all data, Council Executive was the most popular recommendation.

#### Organic Act Presentation (9:09)

Dr. Cann presented on the Cache County Organic Act, adopted by voters in 1984 and effective January 1, 1987. He noted the current version, as last amended a couple of years prior, was largely identical to the original.

- County Executive Role (CEO):
  - Serves a four-year term with no term limits.
  - Carries out programs and policies enacted by the council.
  - Directs and organizes county management.
  - Enforces laws and supervises county officer conduct.
  - Makes appointments, produces a tentative budget, and conducts planning studies.
  - Possesses substantial veto power, including the ability to wield a line item veto.
- County Council Role:
  - Composed of seven members serving staggered four-year terms in geographic districts.
  - Representatives must live in the district they represent.
  - District boundaries are set by the council and are to be reevaluated from time to time, though not strictly mandated every ten years (like the decennial census requirement).
  - Jack Draxler recalled a reorganization of districts about four or five years ago, specifically related to representation in Logan City.
- Council Powers and Duties:
  - Enacts ordinances and resolutions.
  - Considers, modifies, and adopts the proposed budget from the executive, including salaries of officials.
  - Sets taxes and fees, and creates administrative policies.
  - Has the ability to conduct oversight hearings and is responsible for an annual audit.
  - Sets duties and functions of appointed boards and commissions.
  - Provides advice and consent on appointments made by the executive.

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- Dr. Cann noted exceptions to the executive's appointment power exist where state law or interlocal agreements specify the council should make the appointment (e.g., the Health Department or special service districts).
- Key Positive Traits of Current Form:
  - A majority of current and former elected officials surveyed felt the current form was operationally effective.
  - Separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches is valued by officials and citizens.
  - There is strong support for geographic representation.
  - The form allows for responsiveness to urgent issues.
  - Most employees felt the county is a positive place to work.

### Recommendations for Consideration (20:00)

Dr. Cann and Andrew Erickson developed a list of potential items for recommendation, regardless of whether the form of government changes:

- Should language regarding the duties and responsibilities of the executive or council be sharpened? Some surveys suggest room for this improvement.
- Could more training be provided, and should it be mandatory? This applies under any form of government.
- Should protocols be established defining the nature and frequency of communication between the executive and council? This would apply in the Council Executive or Council Manager forms.
- What should be the role of professional management? Appointing a professional manager is not precluded by the Council Executive format.
- Should the language in the Organic Act be made gender neutral? The current language, written in 1984, is not.
- The Finance Office is currently situated under the Auditor, which has caused back-and-forth between the Council and the Executive. The committee could decide if they wish to weigh in on who the director of finance administration reports to (Auditor vs. Executive).

### Legal Guidance

Dr. Cann noted that the County Attorney had provided some quick answers on things requiring legal guidance:

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- Ed Buist requested clarification on the record regarding the discussion of making county row offices (Recorder, Treasurer, Auditor, etc.) appointed by the executive. Dr. Cann confirmed that under current state law, these offices must be elected. This is not an option without a change in state code.
- Dr. Cann provided a clear answer of "No" to the question of whether an optional plan can provide for the removal from office of county officials (other than what is already provided in state law for criminal activity, malfeasance, or neglect).
- The committee could consider recommending calling the County Executive a "County Mayor," as is done in Salt Lake County.
- The Organic Act could be amended to add language stating that the executive holds appointment power "unless otherwise stated in state law or in an interlocal agreement," which might resolve some ongoing questions.
- The committee could research if the county can impose requirements like term limits on executive or legislative offices.
- Should specified timelines for redrawing district boundaries be included in the Organic Act?

Jack Draxler noted that the committee needs to decide how deep into the weeds they want to go, suggesting their primary job is to recommend a form of government with the possibility of strongly suggesting certain policy/procedure changes or further evaluation.

#### Deliberation on Form of Government (35:43)

Jack Draxler suggested beginning deliberation on the form of government and geographical representation, postponing policy and procedure discussions.

Jack Draxler kicked off the discussion by stating his emerging common thread: the current Council Executive form is okay, and the committee's research does not demonstrate that a different form will demonstrably make Cache County a better place.

Comments from Committee Members:

- Blake Wright agreed with the common thread favoring the current form and is leaning against the commission forms. He noted the current form has worked well for 35+ years, with bumps only in the last four or five years, suggesting the optional plan needs review. He likes the separation of powers and accountability to the people afforded by the Council Executive form, viewing the Council Manager form as potentially leading to a manager subservient to the council or one who becomes too powerful.
- Ed Buist described the process as an interesting journey and mentioned coming in with preconceived notions but promised himself to remain open. He cited the value of reviewing history and archives, and the consensus from various surveys (mayors, former executives, employees, and public meetings) confirmed that the existing system, though not perfect, has been "pretty darn good."

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- Jordan Mathis started his response by mentioning his biggest concern with the default (commission) form of government is the concentration of power and the small number of required votes. While he was interested in the idea of a council-manager form of government, he ultimately believed that Cache County would be well off sticking to the current council-executive form.
- Brian Cox and Jack Draxler concurred that given the findings of the committee over the past several months, they would be in favor of maintaining the current form of county government with some possible recommendations to improve its current function. They expressed skepticism about the commission forms of government, and expressed that the separated branches of government of the council form seemed more superior in their appeal (particularly the council-executive form given its elected executive).

### Report Writing and Next Steps

It was noted that since the committee was recommending no change in the form of county government in its report to the Cache County Council, there would not need to be the drafting of a new optional plan. Dr. Damon Cann noted that even though the committee was recommending no change in the form of government, state code allows the committee to include in its report a list of suggestions to improve the operations of the [current] form of county government.

- There was somewhat varied discussion on the exact level of “getting into the weeds” of the recommendations given in the report of the county council, from giving specific suggestions to recommending that the county and/or state legislature look into improving general areas of focus.
- The committee agreed that at its next meeting it would discuss drafting its report to the county council. Members of the committee agreed to come with a list of suggested ways or areas of study to better improve the operation of the council-executive form of county government.

### Setting a Revised Date for Next Meeting

Due to some scheduling conflicts the committee decided to change its next meeting date and time from November 19th @ 7:00 PM to Thursday, November 20th @ 7:00 PM at the same meeting location (Cache County Council Chambers located at 199 N Main St, Logan, UT 84321).

At approximately 8:30 PM, Committee Chair Jack Draxler adjourned the committee.

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**Next meeting of the committee: Thursday, November 20th at 7:00 PM, @ Cache County Council Chambers (located at 199 N Main St, Logan, UT 84321)**