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**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** CHRIS MCCANDLESS

**SUBJECT:** FUNDING FOR THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION

**DATE:** MAY 13, 2019

**CC:** MIKE APPLGARTH

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Council:

As part of the public hearing process for the FY 2019-20 Budget, I strongly recommend that we consider appropriating \$100,000 to Central Wasatch Commission (CWC). This amount is consistent with our original contribution as a founding member of the CWC. My thoughts on the benefits to Sandy City residents as a result of this continued partnership are included in the attached letter.



## Central Wasatch Commission – Annual Update

May 10, 2019

Dear Council Members,

Over the past year or so, I have been working on solutions to what we collectively have expressed is the most significant quality of life issue we face here in **Sandy**; the various problems facing Little Cottonwood Canyon and our related open spaces (collectively - LCC).

Through our municipal membership and representation in the Central Wasatch Commission (CWC) we have held dozens upon dozens of meetings, obtained and created plans, gathered voluminous amounts of public comments and worked on the CWC mandated tasks as outlined in the Mountain Accord Agreement. From what the CWC has discerned from the years of efforts as a result of the collective work of the ten-member CWC representatives, It is my opinion that the primary canyon/open space issues facing Sandy City are:

1. **WATERSHED PROTECTION.** With the population explosion projected to double along the Wasatch Front, our primary watershed and drinking water is at risk of becoming contaminated with the growth impacts and its associated recreational use of the Wasatch front mountain range, specifically the impacts to LCC and the Lone Peak Wilderness areas watershed. With the majority of our culinary water coming from these two areas that are not within the jurisdictional control of Sandy City, it is paramount that we use all means at our disposal to protect this resource.
2. **TRANSPORTATION.** The canyons transportation issue in LCC has a dramatic impact on the residents located adjacent to Highway 210, Wasatch Boulevard and Little Cottonwood Road. Numerous times during the year (winter and summer seasons) these roads are clogged with traffic trying to get to LCC resulting in complete failure of the road systems in these areas. It is not uncommon to have a 20-minute ride up the canyon take 3-4 hours! Unless we as the leaders in our community take action, it is guaranteed to get worse, much worse.

We should all recognize that LCC road has been declared to be the most dangerous road of its kind **IN THE WORLD**. As a result of constant vehicle accidents (especially in the winter) people are constantly getting maimed and killed while traveling this unsafe road and we need to act now to save our citizens from what can be prevented with a short to long term plan and improvements.

3. **OPEN SPACE PROTECTION.** Lone Peak Wilderness, Bell Canyon along with the forested areas in Little Cottonwood Canyon is Sandy City's largest open space and recreational areas. With the population along the Wasatch Front continuing to show robust growth together with the thousands upon thousands desiring to hike, climb, ski and recreate in LCC, it's clear that as we grow these segments of our societies preferred canyon activities will continue to have both a positive and negative impact to Sandy City and will increasingly more evident as time goes by. Our responsibility to the open space in the canyon areas is a need to provide protection of this fragile environment to prevent overuse thereby permanently damaging this resource. If we do not provide that protection, then we will have failed in our respective stewardship responsibilities.

It's interesting to note that BCC and LCC have more visits than Yellowstone or all five of the National Parks in Utah combined. Realizing this fact and acknowledging that our valley population will double in the very foreseeable future, we need to take a look at just how many people can we put in the canyon daily before we do irreparable harm to the environment.

4. **PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS.** In our canyons, there are numerous private property parcels owned by citizens and a host of others that have no constructive use of their property. This lack of use is as a result of no culinary water resources and related rights and in some cases no valid access. In addition, the property in these areas are impacted as a result of sub-surface mining claims that have left our mountain littered with old mining tunnels, mining debris and excavated tailings areas impacting our sensitive watershed areas. Clearly, we should provide as much of a mechanism for our resident owners and others to be able to reclaim, exchange, sell or utilize their property to the extent possible given their restraints as mentioned.
5. **Economic Impacts.** Snowbird and Alta recreation areas are a large part of our life. We enjoy these recreation areas but these are also significant employment centers where a great number of residents work, live and play. Without these two recreation areas being a vibrant successful part of our community, scores of businesses here locally would suffer dramatically as hotel visitation, restaurant, retail outlets and other canyon related companies here in Sandy would suffer.

I am certain that you all know that the CWC is represented through ten members but just as a reminder, the members are listed as follows:

1. Sandy City – Councilman McCandless
2. Cottonwood Heights City – Mayor Peterson

3. Millcreek City – Mayor Silvestrini
4. Park City – Mayor Beerman
5. Salt Lake City – Mayor Biskupski
6. Summit County – Commissioner Robison
7. Salt Lake County – Mayor Wilson
8. Salt Lake County – Councilman Bradley
9. Utah Department of Transportation – Director Beceras
10. Town of Alta – Mayor Sondak

As an organization, the CWC has an Executive Director – Ralph Becker with two additional employees; Jesse Dean and Linsey Nielsen who direct the day to day operations and run the programs that have been and are being implemented based upon the priorities mentioned above.

It is clear that the Town of Alta, Sandy and Cottonwood Heights Cities are receiving the majority of the benefits of the CWC efforts. For example, the UDOT EIS and the Cottonwood Canyon Transportation Action Plan (CCTAP) is in the process to define the transportation solutions initially along Highway 210, Little Cottonwood Canyon Road (9400 South) and Wasatch Boulevard. These solutions will be culminated in a Record of Decision (ROD) within the next 24 months. The CCTAP (a \$1.5 million study funded through UDOT) has begun implementing programs that are outside of the UDOT EIS study area such as trailhead parking expansion, restrooms, additional watershed protection, canyon capacity analysis and other related projects to protect the open space as defined above.

The next major effort being undertaken is the Conservation Recreation Area (CRA) Federal Legislation. This CRA will have an impact on most of the Wasatch Front federally owned lands in Big, Little Cottonwood Canyons and Millcreek. The objective here is to protect and preserve with certain limiting actions so that we do not overuse and abuse the Canyons and our open spaces. This effort is significant and has been referred to as the solution to the 40-year war between differing canyon users, organizations, landowners and ski resorts. If we are successful in this endeavor, we will have resolved decades of conflicts between these groups and perhaps, we can all truly live in harmony and rest assured that the Canyons are protected and resultantly, our quality of life.

In conclusion, the CWC has recently requested that each of the members formally adopt a resolution of support to the activities as described above. This resolution can be submitted to the State leadership as well as our Federal Delegation in Washington.

Lastly, the CWC members have adopted a 2019/20 Budget with a membership contribution schedule as it relates to the costs for its fiscal year 2019-20. This funding is needed to move the

process described above forward and make certain we retain a seat at the table. It is clear, that we are presently receiving far more value for our contribution that the amount recommended.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris McCandless". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Chris McCandless

Sandy City Councilman District Four