

Legislative Policy Committee Meeting minutes

August 17, 2015 @ 12:00 p.m.

Zion's Bank

Welcome by Lynn Pace, First Vice President of the Utah League of Cities and Towns.

Lynn took a motion to adopt the minutes, and then received a second. Minutes were passed.

Rep. Eric Hutchings then addressed the LPC on criminal justice and public safety. He began with Justice Reinvestment, and shared that they have learned a great deal over the last few years. Rep. Hutchings shared how the Justice Reinvestment efforts began, stating that it was largely because of the recidivism rate. In 2013 prison admissions show that 1/3 of those in prison were there for a new crime, while the other 2/3 were in prison because of a parole or probation violation. There are three types of individuals who go to prison. There are those who want to be criminals. They speak "big stick," which has worked in the past. Then there are those who have a substance abuse problem. And finally, there are those who have mental health issues. The last two come out of prison and hate society. The current objective is to do an early screening process to better understand why an individual is there, and then put them on the right correctional track, which includes the right treatment and supervision. To help change behavior of these last two, action needs to be swift and it needs to be certain. In the past both good and bad behavior received the same treatment. Rep. Hutchings thanked Ogden for helping him understand how they deal with this process and what takes place. He also talked about ways that good behavior might be rewarded, and about taking immediate action on bad behavior. He shared that we can't treat the gangster and the mental health and drug issues the same. This is an effort to try to refocus to help those who have been released from prison to be successful. Rep. Hutchings said that prosecutors still have concerns, but have been good to meet with, but wanted to make it clear that longer prison sentences for those with mental health and drug issues doesn't work. He shared how being incarcerated significantly impacts that individual's life in the first 30 days. If they are truly a criminal, they need to be kept off the streets, but the others aren't getting what they need to stay out of trouble.

A question was asked about how sex offenders are being treated in this process. Rep. Hutchings said that they haven't been addressed yet, but are being closely looked at on how to deal with them, stating that it is a much more sensitive area.

Lynn, asked Rep. Hutchings if the purpose of his visit was only informational, or would he like some action from the LPC. Rep. Hutchings responded by asking that we encourage our police officials to engage in this discussion and process to help it be successful for everyone, and stated they are making a sincere effort to have this paid for so the cost is not put on the cities and towns.

Gary Hill, City Manager for Bountiful then addressed the LPC to discuss police relations with cities and with city residents. Gary acknowledged that there is currently a tough public perception of law enforcement. Gary turned the time over to his police chief, Chief Ross.

Chief Ross mentioned that he was just recently put in as the President of the Police Chiefs Association. Chief Ross said he realizes that there is a perception issue with law enforcement, and that there is work to be done, even if it is only a small percentage of issues that are creating the problem. He acknowledged that legislatively there will be much to do, as well as in the public relations arena. Chief Ross acknowledged that police officials and cities work well together, but because they do, the negative that is impacting the police, is also impacting the cities. Chief Ross said there are three areas that need to be addressed. First, the image of law enforcement. Second, there needs to be a legislative front. Third, there needs to be a response arm that can act quickly to address issues.

Nick Jarvis from the League quickly addressed a survey that is going to be sent out to kick off an issue specific library that will include areas for clerks, attorneys, chiefs, etc. This first survey will be on law enforcement and how cities handle it. Nick asked for help from those present in collecting that data.

Cameron Diehl said that we expect quite a few issues dealing with law enforcement, and that we have put together a team to help address those issues as they come up. Other legislative policy issues will be addressed in more detail at ULCT's Annual Convention. Some of those issues include wildland fire, water, Good Landlord, and law enforcement. Cameron briefly mentioned that board nominations were coming due shortly, as well as resolutions.

John Tanner from Senator Hatch's staff addressed the LPC on transportation funding. John shared that the Senate this year was able to make more progress in this area than in the last six years. John said that he feels that the Senate-passed DRIVE Act will pass through the House. Sen. Hatch was able to get two amendments into the bill that empower local governments. The bill authorizes funding for six years, but only has funding for three years. The Drive Act does not raise taxes or increase the deficit. They have worked hard to find those dollars from elsewhere. John mentioned they would love to hear from the local communities through the national organizations to encourage the passage of as long a term bill as possible.

Question from Mayor Brent Taylor of North Ogden. He said the federal process causes one dollar to only be able to buy fifty cents of asphalt, and wanted to know if there was any help on streamlining the process? John said that there is discussion on that. The best way to help is to let your Congressman know of specific examples showing why things aren't working. Streamlining efforts and discussions are taking place.

Cameron Diehl quickly addressed HB 362. He shared that 113 cities and towns passed resolutions, representing about 80% of the population, and that 9 counties have acted as of today. Many more counties are getting ready to consider it. Cameron explained that people are watching what you do as an elected official and staff, and that a document has been created to help you know what you can and can't do in promoting/opposing the transportation proposition going on ballots. The baseline is that you can't use public funds to influence a ballot proposition. He also explained that what the county must do, is different then what the city may do.

Online Paul Larsen asked if an opponent's information has to be "factual," and if so, who determines that? Cameron responded that there is no center for factual information anywhere. Cameron encouraged that cities use factual information, and that if there is an issue with opponents spreading information that is not factual, then perhaps go to the LG's office, or use your rebuttal (laid out in the document of what can and cannot be done by a city).

There was a question asking if it is a problem to interact with the transportation coalition? Cameron responded that you can interact with them, just don't use public funds, or interact with them during your work time if you are a city employee.

Cameron then addressed the use of public emails in the conversation of opposing or promoting the ballot proposition. He shared that you cannot use your public email to respond to emails regarding the proposition. Cameron did note that you can receive emails on both sides of the issue, but must use a personal email to respond to those emails, or make a phone call.

There was a question on how the "brief statement" and the 500 word statement interact. Cameron answered that "brief" is not defined, but try and adhere as closely to what the counties are doing as possible.

Chip Dawson asked a question about South Jordan collecting lots of information on projects in there city, and whether or not it can be referenced? Cameron's answer was to try and use pictures (because they don't count toward your word count), and try to keep as close to what the counties have to do. If you and your legal staff feel comfortable with your actions then you may go ahead.

Cameron responded to a scenario question by saying that, you can have meetings as a city, but you must provide equal access for all.

Cameron shared that counties have to act by August 30 to put transportation on the ballot if they want to do so. He informed everyone that wildland fire meetings are continuing to take place, and that ULCT's Annual Convention is coming up, and to look for more info in the Friday Facts Emails.

Motion to adjourn, and a second, the motion passed.