



WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

of Utah County

October 22, 2013

Program Topic: “What’s on the Horizon for Utah County”

Presented by: City/State Issues Committee

Director: Suzanne Merrill

Chair: Sue Curtis

Speakers: John Curtis – Provo City Mayor

Larry Ellertson – Utah County Commissioner

Mayor Curtis began by saying he sometimes worries that our frustration with government at the federal level may show itself as apathy regarding government at the local level. We need to remember that local government issues affect us most immediately. Local officials are also the most accessible to us.

He reported that the downtown Provo area is experiencing a renewed vibrancy. The Provo Recreation Center continues to be a huge success. It has recently added 4,000 new memberships. It’s total membership represents about 25% of the population of Provo, which is really quite amazing.

Almost \$.75B has been invested in development within a one-mile radius of downtown Provo. Watch also for exciting new urban residential units to be part of the downtown resurgence. Mayor Curtis remarked that the NuSkin building’s new ground level open space/foyer is a community area that is meant to be enjoyed by the public. Be sure to visit it.

Road maintenance for Provo City costs about \$4M every year. The mayor said this expenditure is essential, as it is always more cost effective to regularly maintain roads rather than wait until conditions deteriorate.

Responding to questions, he said Google bought Provo’s antiquated fiber optic network last July and will upgrade it with modern technology to become an exciting new addition to Provo’s business community. New channels are being added. Landlines will not be available. Also, the LDS Church is considering a \$6M land sale offer by the Provo Post Office.

County Commissioner Ellertson said the work being done on the Murdock Trails is very exciting. Even more extensions are to come. Approximately 130,000 people are using these “non-motorized” trails. The public trails are available to walking/running pedestrians, as well as enthusiasts riding bicycles and horses. Southwest Utah Valley has more motorized trails available at this time.

The Murdock trail in Provo Canyon will connect to several trail systems that go clear around the Point of the Mountain. It is hoped that connections can also be made to Soldier's Hollow.

Utah County has been consulting with the Murdock and Highland Canal Companies on the west side of Utah Lake. The ultimate goal is to make one great interconnecting network of trails. Surprisingly, the trails have been found to experience heavier traffic during commuter hours. A growing number of bike riders are accessing them to get to & from work.

Responding to questions, Commissioner Ellertson said a Provo bridge across Utah Lake is possible, but not imminent. One continuing lake issue is the look of its water. The lake water is not unsafe. But because the lake is shallow, the bottom solids are always suspended, giving the water an unattractive appearance.

FrontRunner train transportation has proved very successful. The cost of a round trip from Provo to Salt Lake City is affordable at only \$9. The County Commission is exploring "Trax-like" transportation for Utah County. The route would go from Provo Towne Center to University Mall to UVU. It would connect there to FrontRunner. The plans are in response to an emerging youth demographic that increasingly clamors for accessible public transportation.

Crime continues to be relatively low in Utah County. The county population is approximately 500,00. There are about 800 prisoners in the county jail at any given time.

Ongoing discussions are poised to bring the Midtown Center debacle to a favorable end. Also on the drawing board is a planned community for 6,000 that will be located just south of Saratoga Springs.

Reported by Wendy Braithwaite

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