

Cache County Form of Government Study
Committee Meeting Minutes – September 25, 2025

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM (MDT)

Place: Hyrum City Council Chambers (60 West Main, Hyrum, 84319)

Present Committee Members/Staff:

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

Excused Committee Members/Staff:

- Andrew Erickson, Committee Secretary

Others Present: Members of the public including County Councilmembers Sandi Goodlander and Nolan Gunnell, as well as Providence City Mayor Kathleen Alder.

1. Call to Order (0:00)

Chair Jack Draxler called the meeting of the Form of Government Study Committee to order. He introduced himself and the members of the committee present.

2. Meeting Purpose and Background (0:00 – 2:46)

- The meeting was established to serve two functions: public outreach by teaching people about the four forms of county government allowed by Utah law, and gathering feedback from the public on those four forms.
- The committee was formed as a result of House Bill 356 passed in the last legislative session, which allowed a county council or commission to appoint a study committee.
- The committee's function is to hear the public's opinions, not to give their own.

3. Committee Responsibilities and Presentation Format (2:46 – 6:30)

- The committee is required to thoroughly study the current Cache County government and compare it to the three additional forms available under Utah law to determine potential improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and accountability.
- Findings must be reported no later than one year after the first meeting (June 2025). The report may propose an optional plan for a change in government form or offer other recommendations.

Cache County Form of Government Study

Committee Meeting Minutes – September 25, 2025

- Dr. Damon Cann would present the four forms of government, followed by a clarifying question and answer session, and then a period for public comment.

4. Forms of County Government in Utah (6:30 – 40:21)

A. The Three-Member County Commission (Default Form)

- Overview: The default form used by about 20 Utah counties; Cache County used this until the mid-1980s.
- Powers: Most executive and all legislative powers are vested in three commissioners elected at large (no districts).
- Discussion: someone asked if the positions were partisan, to which Jack Draxler confirmed they are. Jordan Mathis noted that an optional plan could allow for districting, though they are currently all at-large in Utah.

B. The Expanded County Commission (Five or Seven Members)

- Overview: Similar to the three-member form but with five or seven members, intended as part-time commissioners.
- Key Distinction: This form separates powers less but allows for a larger, part-time governing body.
- Scope: someone asked if the purview covers the entire county or just unincorporated areas. Dr. Damon Cann clarified the purview is over the entire county, including coordination roles like Sheriff services and regional planning.

C. Council Executive (Current Cache County Form)

- Overview: Promotes separation of powers. Legislative authority is vested in an elected County Council (current practice is by district), and executive powers are vested in an elected County Executive.
- Checks: The Executive has veto power over Council ordinances, but the Executive cannot initiate legislation. The Executive can only be removed by a vote of the people, not the Council.
- Discussion: someone asked about the status of council members being full-time. Dr. Damon Cann stated that Cache and Salt Lake are the only two counties using this form, and the council sets the wages (part-time or full-time). someone also noted that the Council has the ultimate budgetary authority, even if the Executive proposes the budget.

D. Council Manager

- Overview: Legislative powers are with the Council, and executive powers are with a County Manager appointed and potentially removed by the Council.
- Distinction: The Manager is typically a professional (MPA-trained), appointed by the Council, not elected.
- Trade-Off: Provides more executive accountability to the legislative body but less separation of powers than the Council Executive form.

5. Discussion on Issues and Public Feedback (40:21 – 1:26:15)

- Jack Draxler noted that after comparing similar-sized counties, there is no significant cost difference between the four forms of government.

Cache County Form of Government Study

Committee Meeting Minutes – September 25, 2025

- Kathleen Alder asked what problem the committee is trying to solve. Ed Buist responded that the committee is seeking the "common thread" of issues reported in preliminary surveys (e.g., personality conflicts, confusion over roles, and discord).
- Someone asked about the timeline if a change were recommended. Dr. Damon Cann estimated a ballot measure in November 2026, with implementation likely starting around 2028.
- Public Comment Summary:
 - Someone suggested the form of government is less important than the personalities elected, which have caused conflicts and discord akin to an "eighth grade class."
 - Someone countered, saying the form does contribute to discord, preferring the Council Manager system as it mirrors a CEO/Board relationship, mitigating the Executive's ability to disagree.
 - someone expressed opposition to the three-member commission, favoring districts for better local representation.

6. Adjournment (1:29:49)

- Public Survey: Dr. Damon Cann presented a QR code for a Qualtrics survey specifically for meeting attendees and encouraged public participation. He also mentioned that the presentation slides and an informational video would be made available online.
- A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.