

Cache County Form of Government Study

Committee Meeting Minutes – October 16, 2025

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM (MDT)

Place: Logan City Council Chambers (290 N 100 W, Logan, UT 84321)

Present Committee Members/Staff:

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

Excused Committee Members/Staff:

Others Present: Holly Daines, Karl Ward, Keegan Garrity, and other members of the public.

1. Call to Order (0:00)

Chair Jack Draxler called the meeting to order and introduced the committee members. He outlined the evening's plan: a presentation on the four forms of county government, followed by a public question and opinion session.

2. Overview of Committee Mandate (0:41)

Mr. Draxler explained the committee's purpose, which is derived from House Bill 356. The goal is to study the four forms of county government allowed by the Utah constitution and recommend either a specific change to the County Council for a public vote or recommend maintaining the current form.

Dr. Damon Cann provided an in-depth review of the committee's charge:

- Thoroughly examine the county's current government against other available forms.
- Find ways to enhance government responsiveness, accountability, and efficiency.
- Hold hearings to gather feedback from key stakeholders—the public.
- File a written report of findings and recommendations, due one year after the first meeting (June), with the option to report sooner.
- If a change is recommended, the committee must detail an optional plan specifying how the new form would operate (e.g., number of commissioners).
- Provide suggestions for improving local government efficiency even if no change in form is recommended.

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3. Presentation on the Four Forms of County Government (9:54)

- Dr. Cann and Mr. Erickson presented the four forms allowed under Utah law: County Commission, Expanded County Commission, Council Executive, and Council Manager.

A. Commission Forms (9:54)

- Dr. Cann covered the commission family, emphasizing the fusion of legislative and executive powers in the same body.
1. Three-Member County Commission (10:14): The default form in Utah. Three full-time commissioners hold all legislative duties (ordinances, budget, tax rates) and executive duties (managing day-to-day operations and employees).
 - Clarifying Question: Holly Daines asked which offices must be elected. Dr. Cann clarified that some, like the Sheriff, are required, but others can be changed by the state legislature or optional plans.
 2. Expanded County Commission (17:10): A form with five or seven part-time commissioners. This differs primarily from the three-member commission in the number of officials and the part-time designation, though compensation is not state-defined.
 - Clarifying Question: someone asked which counties use this form. The answer was Morgan and Grand County.

B. Council Forms (20:50)

- Andrew Erickson covered the council family, emphasizing the separation of legislative and executive powers.
1. Council Executive (20:50): Cache County's current form. A separate, elected County Executive handles administrative duties. Legislative power is vested in a County Council (3, 5, 7, or 9 members). The Executive can veto ordinances passed by the Council.
 - Clarifying Question: someone referenced the possibility of elected offices being changed via an optional plan. Jordan Mathis clarified that the existing County Optional Plan defines the roles of the executive and council in the county's governance.
 2. Council Manager (24:56): Similar to the Council Executive, but an appointed County Manager (often with a professional administration background) handles day-to-day services. The Manager is directly accountable to the County Council, which can dismiss them. Council ordinances are not subject to veto by the manager.
 - Comment: Karl Ward noted that Summit and Wasatch counties chose the Council Manager form to focus on operational efficiency and avoid the issues they observed elsewhere.

4. Public Feedback Session (30:23)

The Chair opened the meeting to public opinions on the four forms.

- Someone shared a positive personal experience with the current County Council, noting they were very responsive and communicative due to the district-based representation.
- Karl Ward expressed that the current Council Executive form works as long as the elected Executive understands the role is to manage the county corporation and services, not act as solely a figurehead.

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- Holly Daines suggested that some positions requiring a specific skill set (like County Attorney or Recorder) might be better as appointed positions to reduce polarization and ensure continuity, rather than elected ones.
- Someone asked about the relative cost of the Manager vs. Executive forms. Dr. Cann reiterated that, based on data from comparable counties, the cost difference is minimal. The greatest impact on cost is determined by the wages and spending decisions set by the elected officials, not the form itself.
- Someone inquired about the reason for Cache County's original move to the Council Executive form. Mr. Draxler explained that the change was pushed by mayors and passed by the people who wanted to disperse power away from the three-commissioner system to a larger part-time council.
- Someone introduced the possibility that a legislative body might be reluctant to choose a ballot option that gives a stronger executive (with veto power) the most authority. Mr. Draxler confirmed the committee's recommendation goes to the Council, which can choose whether to put it to the voters.

5. Other Business and Adjournment (1:02:22)

- Checks and Balances: Dr. Cann explained that the committee's formation is a check and balance, as their recommendation helps shape and constrain the choices available to the County Council.
- Data-Driven Decision: Karl Ward stressed that the committee is using quantitative and qualitative data from multiple surveys (elected officials, adjacent entities, employees, public) to make a data-driven recommendation.
- Next Steps: Dr. Cann provided a QR code for attendees to complete the public opinion survey. The results from the current, previous (Hyrum), and future (Smithfield) public meetings will be combined. The Chair then called for a motion to adjourn.
- Adjournment (1:11:22): A motion to approve was moved and seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.