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## Sarah Stock appointed to Grand County Commission

Rachel Fixsen Moab Sun News  
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Sarah Stock was approved to fill outgoing commissioner Jaylyn Hawks's seat at the Jan. 5 meeting of the Grand County Commission. [Courtesy photo]

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### Story Highlights

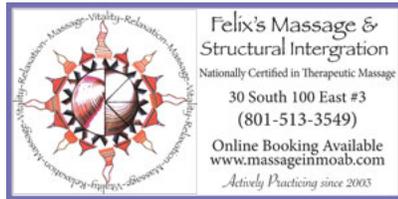
Commissioners examine county's membership in coalition group

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The Grand County Commission held their first regular meeting of 2021 on Jan. 5, working through a dense agenda that included the appointment of a new commissioner to replace Jaylyn Hawks, a discussion of Grand County's membership in the Utah Association of Counties and votes on several amendments to the land use code.

### Welcome, Sarah Stock

Commissioner Jaylyn Hawks has stepped down from her position while she temporarily resides in Japan, where her husband is a visiting professor. Steven Stocks, Josie Kovash, Steve Getz, and Sarah Stock contended for the Grand County Commission vacancy.



Commissioner Gabriel Woytek moved to appoint Sarah Stock, pointing to her experience as program director at Living Rivers, a nonprofit Colorado River watershed stewardship organization, as an important asset that will inform the commission's work on water issues in the near future. (See "A thirsty valley," on page 1 of this edition. -ed.)

"Sarah Stock is the applicant that has tangible experience and background in understanding the topic of water in the county," said Woytek. "

The motion to appoint Stock to the commission passed 5-1. New commissioner Trish Hedin voted against the appointment to demonstrate her preference for Getz to fill the seat.

"I'm not really opposed," Hedin said of Stock. "I think she'll do a spectacular job."

Stock was sworn in and able to vote in the remainder of the meeting.

### **UAC membership**

Grand County has been questioning the value of its membership in the Utah Association of Counties, a private nonprofit dedicated to supporting county governments in Utah through advocacy at state and federal levels, training and education, and conducting research and informing members on current issues. Yearly membership dues total nearly \$24,000, which includes payment for a public lands attorney.

Representatives from UAC, including Director of Government Affairs Lincoln Shurtz, CEO Brandy Grace, and Public Lands Council Jake Garfield attended the meeting to try to persuade the commission to maintain Grand County's membership.

"I think where we really have had a difficult time in terms of working with Grand County is making sure that we clearly understand what you guys' driving factors are when considering legislation," Shurtz told the commission.

He referred to House Bill 224 of 2018, for which UAC advocated at the state legislature. The bill forced Grand County to change its form of government, sparking conflict and several lawsuits over the next two years. Former commissioner Curtis Wells was representing Grand County to UAC at the time.

Shurtz said that this year, UAC is instituting a new policy that any request for action from a county must be validated by a signature from the chair of the elected body to verify that the proposal has the support of that body, preventing one official from deciding policy.

Grand County Commission Chair Mary McGann agreed that the HB 224 debacle had damaged Grand County's trust in UAC. She pointed out that as late as 2019, UAC was supporting a proposed bill that would have mandated a three-person commission form of government in rural counties.



Grand County officials are also hesitant to pay for a public lands attorney, suspecting that Grand County's stance on public lands is unlikely to align with that of other Utah counties.

"I think Grand County's fairly unique in that we have a fairly good relationship with our BLM and forestry departments," McGann told the UAC representatives. "We treasure our public lands and we want to protect them."

County Attorney Christina Sloan said that Grand County has been candid in providing feedback to UAC, with unsatisfactory replies.

"It's not necessarily a UAC problem—it is that we don't fit. Dues are increasing, the scope of what you're doing is increasing. And yet we don't feel like it's benefiting Grand County," said Sloan.

Shurtz and Garfield highlighted UAC's successful efforts that have benefited Grand County, such as getting \$6 million allocated to rural Emergency Medical Services agencies, some of which could make its way to Grand County, and correcting a mistake in the state's Payment in Lieu of Taxes calculations. Correcting that error brought \$300,000 to Grand County that had been unpaid due to an oversight.

No action was taken on the issue at the meeting.

### **Land use amendments and camping restrictions**

The commission unanimously approved amendments that affect land within the boundaries of the Small Area Plan, which is the area near Highway 191 and Highway 313. The Planning and Zoning Commission has been gathering public input and crafting code to implement development planning guidelines for the area. The preferred zoning for any re-zone requests in the area will be the Resort Special zone, and a "Scenic Resource Protection" overlay has been applied to the area.

The commission also considered amendments to ordinances related to camping on private property in Grand County. According to Sloan, the existing ordinances were intended to ban camping on private property, but were poorly written and are difficult to enforce. Community Development Director Mila Dunbar-Irwin presented amendments that make the camping prohibition more clear and enforceable.

Commissioners expressed concern about the amendments' potential impact on residents.

New commissioner Jacques Hadler said he relied on camping when he first moved to Moab.

“I arrived in Moab, like a lot of people, as a dirtbag seasonal and I spent the first three years or so scrambling for camping spots around the town and the county,” he said.

Sloan said her office does not receive many complaints about “dirtbag van-lifers” illegally camping, but that it does receive a lot of complaints about RVs, generators, groups of RVs, and “the toys that come with them.” Sloan and Dunbar-Irwin emphasized that the ordinances would be enforced based on complaints—staff would not be scouring the town searching for violators.

The amendments passed 4-2, with Woytek and Stock voting in opposition and Hadler abstaining.

*The Grand County Commission meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 4 p.m. Meetings are streamed online at the Grand County Government Youtube channel. Agendas and instructions on public comment can be found at [www.grandcountyutah.net/134/County-Council](http://www.grandcountyutah.net/134/County-Council).*

