



# VOTER INFORMATION PAMPHLET

2020 GENERAL ELECTION  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>

The arguments for or against a ballot proposition are the opinions of the authors.



# PROPOSITION # 10

## **PROPOSITION #10 TEXT:**

Shall Grand County adopt the alternate form of government known as the Council- Manager Form, pursuant to the Optional Plan for Grand County Government that the study committee has recommended?

- FOR  
 AGAINST

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### Argument **FOR** Proposition #10:

The passage of House Bill 224 in 2018 required that Grand County change its form of government to one of the four forms of government allowed by Utah statute. The Grand County Change in Form of Government Study Committee, a diverse group of seven county voters, was created by the County Council and tasked with studying those approved forms of government and recommending to the voters of Grand County the one that best fit the needs of this county.

Over the course of 10 months the Committee held over twenty open public meetings to solicit citizen input including: a special educational meeting at Star Hall led by Attorney Gavin Anderson and four public open houses to answer citizen questions and discuss the differences in the 4 forms of government. The Committee also conducted an anonymous citizen survey and received over 250 responses. Individual in-person interviews were conducted with county council members, county elected officials, the County Council Administrator, and all county department heads.

Based on the strong preference expressed through public input for a form of government with a separation of powers, along with interviews, contact with other counties, and hours of discussion, the Study Committee recommended that a Plan for a council-manager form of government be submitted to the voters. This Council would have the legislative authority and would hire a professional manager who would have the executive responsibility and authority to manage the county departments and assure the proper operation of the county within the framework of regulation, policy, and budget established by the council. Any county manager operating outside of their authority would be subject to removal by the council. Council members would be elected "at large", allowing voters to vote for all five council seats.

The county council members would be part-time officials and would not receive benefits beyond salary. The base annual salaries would be reduced from \$36,425 to \$22,200 for the chair, and from \$31,000 to \$19,200 for the remaining council members for a total savings of \$123,625 each year.

In 2020, the State Legislature grandfathered the Grand County Change of County Government process into legislation, but prohibited small counties in the future from ever selecting a county council form of government.

If Prop 10 is voted down, Grand County voters will lose the opportunity to change to a council-manager form of government for all time.

We recommend voting FOR Prop 10.

For more information go to: <https://grandcountyutah.net/984/Changing-Form-of-Government>

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## **PROPOSITION #10 TEXT:**

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### Argument **AGAINST** Proposition #10:

This ballot proposition would take executive authority away from the county's elected, legislative body and, instead, give executive authority to an unelected, appointed county manager.

Moab City has a similar council-manager form of government. This proposition would make the county's government structure more like the city's.

As explained below, this council-manager arrangement would likely make county government less transparent and less responsive to voters.

It is important to note that if this proposition fails, the county legislative body could still choose to hire a county manager and delegate some responsibilities for running day-to-day operations, as it has done in the past. However, the legislative body would have more flexibility in making sure that the county government remains responsive to voters.

The council-manager form of government in proposition 10 treats executive authority in a rigid and inflexible way. A "No" vote on this proposition would give the county more flexibility and better ability to respond to changing times and changing needs of citizens.

In recent years, Moab City has experienced the following issues with its council-manager form of government:

- A very unpopular city manager caused a lot of disruption, and the city council's hands were tied in dealing with the situation.
- Controversial projects were approved by a city manager, without the legal requirement for wide public input.

By taking executive authority away from elected representatives and transferring it to an unelected county manager, problems similar to the above would become more likely in Grand County.

Advocates for proposition 10 seem worried that if our elected representatives have executive authority, they will use that authority to micromanage county staff. But Grand County's legislative body has had executive authority for decades, and this has not been an issue thus far. Proposition 10 is proposing several big, significant changes to address a problem that doesn't really seem to exist.

Two additional reasons to vote "No" on proposition 10: Earlier this year, the state legislature *again* rewrote the rules on county forms of government, this time prohibiting counties with smaller populations (such as Grand County) from adopting council-manager forms. Thus, if proposition 10 passes, Grand County would *again* have a "non-conforming" form of government, and it is likely that in the future we would once again be required to modify it, as recently happened with our longstanding and popular plan that had been in place since 1992.

As a final note, proposition 10 would also remove districts and reduce the number of elected members' seats. Voters who like our current mixture of districts and at-large seats should vote "No" on prop. 10. Voters who prefer commissions to council-manager forms should also vote "No" on 10, since propositions 16 and 17 give voters additional options on districts and on the number of seats.

### **Sponsor:**

Kya Marienfeld

346 Riversands Drive Moab, UT 84532



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 AGAINST

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## Rebuttal against argument for Proposition #10:

The Study Committee's proposal, though well-intentioned, contains two serious flaws.

First, the proposal puts **too much power** into the hands of an **unelected** county manager. In state and federal government, we have separation of powers, but the executive (governor or president) is elected, not appointed. The appointed manager in the Study Committee proposal would not be directly accountable to voters, and that increases the chances that county staff will be less responsive to voters' concerns.

If Prop 10 fails, Grand County will still have a professional county manager, but the elected representatives will have more flexibility in managing the county.

Second, Prop 10 makes changes which would likely result in a less political and geographic diversity on the County Council. The number of seats would be reduced from seven to five, which directly reduces the variety of viewpoints represented on the Council. Under Prop 10, **all five council members would be elected by exactly the same pool of voters. The likely result is that all five council members would share similar political beliefs.** Moab City elects all five of its council members at large, and this has resulted in a City Council where all five members share similar views.

The advertised salary savings are only a tiny fraction of the overall county budget, and in any case would not last long because under Prop 10 council members would still be able to set their own salaries.

We can do better than Prop 10. **Vote NO on Prop 10.**

### **Sponsor:**

**Kya Marienfeld**

**346 Riversands Drive Moab, UT 84532**



# PROPOSITION # 16

## **PROPOSITION #16 TEXT:**

Shall Section 2.04.030 (Governing body) of the Grand County Plan for County Government be amended to change the composition of the Commission from seven members to five, as follows: "The governing body of the county shall be a five- member county commission (the Commission ), which shall ..."

- FOR
- AGAINST

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### Argument FOR Proposition #16:

It is understandable for a community like Moab to realize the need and value for a representative board that is larger than three members. Lessons from our past have taught us that expanding our board of representatives beyond three has created a more inclusive and diverse collection of community members to serve as our legislative and executive authorities in Grand County. Our more immediate history and current exercises in County government have also clearly proven that while three members is too few, seven members is too many. The pursuit of increased transparency and a more representative board taken too far can harm the ability for a board to work efficiently and effectively through issues and challenges. Far too long have we witnessed a lack of effort and engagement from one or more board members while four to five members do most of the work for the board and subsequently the county. A five-member board of elected representatives allows for a diversity in membership without sacrificing efficiency and productivity of the board through excessiveness and an over-abundance of members. Boards of seven members and greater are common in Utah's urban areas, yet they still generate concerns and frustrations pertaining to their ability to legislate and govern with efficiency. While we are a very diverse community, we remain a rural class 5 county that will greatly benefit with a reduction to a five-member board.

A YES vote on Prop 16 is a vote for an elected body that can work with efficiency and productivity, while allowing for transparency and a diverse membership of community members.

### **Sponsor:**

**Curtis Wells**

**763 Palisade Drive**

**Moab, UT 84532**



# PROPOSITION # 16

## **PROPOSITION #16 TEXT:**

Shall Section 2.04.030 (Governing body) of the Grand County Plan for County Government be amended to change the composition of the Commission from seven members to five, as follows: "The governing body of the county shall be a five- member county commission (the Commission ), which shall ..."

- FOR  
 AGAINST

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## Argument **AGAINST** Proposition #16:

A Yes vote on Proposition 16 is a vote to reduce diversity on the County Commission. Changing the number of seats from seven to five would mean fewer voices and fewer points of view on the commission. **Vote No on proposition 16.**

**Grand County is a very diverse place, and the County Commission should reflect that diversity. It's much easier to do this with seven seats than it is with five.**

For the past 28 years, Grand County's legislative body has had seven members. This has allowed for increased ideological diversity, age diversity, income diversity, and geographic diversity on the council/commission. **More seats means more points of view are represented, and more points of view means better decision-making.** Vote No on Proposition 16.

The arguments offered in favor of five seats don't add up:

\* "Fewer seats mean fewer commissioners who don't pull their weight." There is no guarantee that only hard-working commissioners will win elections. Fewer seats is just as likely to result in fewer hard-working commissioners. More seats means more opportunities for hard-working, committed commissioners to be elected.

\* "Seven seats is unwieldy." With seven seats a commissioner needs to persuade at least three of his or her colleagues to pass an ordinance. With five seats, a commissioner would need to persuade only two others to pass an ordinance. **Seven seats makes it harder for bad ideas to become law.**

\* "Five seats would save money." In counties throughout Utah, fewer commission seats typically means higher salaries. Fewer seats means a higher workload for each commissioner, which creates pressure for higher salaries. Commissions can review and set salaries each year, whether there are five seats or seven.

**To repeat, Grand County is a very diverse place, and the County Commission should reflect that diversity. It's much easier to do this with seven seats than it is with five.**

## **Sponsor:**

Liz Thomas

3291 Juniper Drive

Moab, UT 84532



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 AGAINST

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## Rebuttal against Argument for Proposition #16:

Mr. Wells admits that a **7-member commission would be more inclusive and diverse**. But then he suggests two reasons why we should not choose a more diverse commission. Both reasons are flawed.

It is claimed that a 5-member commission would be more efficient. I have attended numerous meetings of both the 5-member Moab City Council and the 7-member Grand County Commission over the years. The 7-member GCC meetings are usually more efficient than the 5-member MCC meetings. **Five members is no guarantee of efficiency**. We should not sacrifice diversity for imaginary efficiency gains that will not actually happen.

It is also claimed that with five members the county commission will have a higher percentage of hard-working members. There is no evidence in recent elections that this is true. Hard-working candidates often lose to less-hard-working candidates at the ballot box. **Reducing the number of seats is just as likely to reduce the number of hard-working commissioners** as it is to reduce the number of not-hard-working commissioners.

A 7-member commission increases the chances that we will have a diverse commission with at least five hard-working commissioners. Vote **NO** on Proposition 16.

### **Sponsor:**

Liz Thomas

3291 Juniper Drive

Moab, UT 84532



# PROPOSITION # 17

## **PROPOSITION #17 TEXT:**

Shall Section 2.04.040.A (Election qualifications, terms and nominations of commission members) of the Grand County Plan for County Government be amended to remove districts seats and elect all commission members at-large, as follows: "All Commission members shall be elected from the county at large. "

- FOR
  - AGAINST
- 

## Argument **FOR** Proposition #17:

Districts are commonly defined as a "distinct unit with a particular characteristic." Grand County's current districts have been widely deemed unconstitutional and are merely antiquated boundaries from past Grand County School District boundaries. As we move towards a more improved and clearly defined County Government, it only makes sense to restore At-Large voting in Grand County Government. While Grand County is a diverse and unique geographic and demographically populated region, these diversities are not concentrated or reside in specific areas of our county. Every street and road in Grand County hosts friends, family, and neighbors with differing views and opinions on issues both local and national. Historical districts in Grand County that were premised on inappropriate boundaries have no place in our future. At-Large districts will allow for the most qualified candidates to become elected to represent their community, regardless of their address in Grand County.

A YES vote on Proposition 17 is a vote for electing the most qualified candidates for local government.

### **Sponsor:**

Curtis Wells

763 Palisade Drive

Moab, UT 84532



# PROPOSITION # 17

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Shall Section 2.04.040.A (Election qualifications, terms and nominations of commission members) of the Grand County Plan for County Government be amended to remove districts seats and elect all commission members at-large, as follows: "All Commission members shall be elected from the county at large."

- FOR  
 AGAINST
- 

## Argument AGAINST Proposition #17:

Proposition 17 would require that all County Commission seats are elected at large. Exactly the same pool of voters would elect each of the County Commission members. This proposed change makes it more likely that each of the County Commissioners would hold similar views. **If you want a more diverse County Commission, vote NO on Proposition 17.**

The Grand County Commission currently has a mixture of at-large and district seats. Voting NO would retain this mixture.

Moab City elects all of its council members at large, and consequently there is less diversity on the Moab City Council than there currently is on the Grand County Commission. A Yes vote on Proposition 17 would make Grand County government more like Moab City in this respect.

A large fraction of the important decisions the County Commission makes are planning and zoning decisions: whether or not to endorse a highway bypass on the west side of the valley, where to locate future high density housing projects and commercial development, etc. If one of the commissioners lives in or near your neighborhood, the interests of your neighborhood are more likely to be understood and protected by the County Commission.

**Electing a majority of county commissioners by district ensures that there is geographic diversity on the commission.** More geographic diversity means better planning and zoning decisions -- decisions that take everyone's interests into account.

If all seats are elected at large, it could easily happen that **all of the commissioners live within a few blocks of each other within Moab city limits**, and yet they would be making planning and zoning decisions for the unincorporated parts of the county.

The arguments offered in favor of all at-large seats don't add up:

\* "I want to be able to vote for all of the commissioners." — You might be able to cast more votes, but each of those votes will have less influence. At-large elections have more voters than district elections, which dilutes and reduces the influence of each individual vote. On balance, Proposition 17 will **not** increase your influence in County Commission elections.

\* "It's easier to recruit candidates if all seats are at-large." — There may be some truth in this, but one pays a heavy price in loss of diversity to gain some ease in candidate recruitment. On balance, the costs of all at-large outweigh the benefits.

Grand County is a diverse place, but if exactly the same pool of voters elects each of the county commissioners, the commission is less likely to reflect that diversity. **Vote NO on Proposition 17**

### Sponsor:

Liz Thomas

3291 Juniper Drive Moab, UT 84532



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- FOR  
 AGAINST
- 

## Rebuttal against Argument for Proposition #17:

Under Prop 17, all seats on the County Commission would be elected by **exactly the same pool of voters**. This would likely result in a **less-diverse County Commission where all commissioners hold similar views**.

The Moab City Council elects all of its member at large; all seats are elected by exactly the same pool of voters. And, unsurprisingly, all five members of the City Council hold similar political views. Prop 17 would make it more likely that Grand County commissioners would be less politically diverse and resemble Moab City in this regard.

Prop 17 would reduce geographic diversity as well as political diversity. Under Prop 17, we could have all County Commissioners living within the city limits, but they would be making zoning decisions for the unincorporated parts of the county in Spanish Valley. **We will have better planning and zoning decisions if County Commissioners live in many different parts of the county.** Prop 17 makes this less likely.

The county is required to redraw district boundaries every 10 years to reflect new census data. The current district boundaries will be redrawn in 2021, which will fix the problems of unequal district populations.

**Prop 17 will reduce both geographic and political diversity on the County Commission. Vote NO on Proposition 17**

## **Sponsor:**

Liz Thomas

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