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City of St. George, three other entities guarantee Zion National Park stays operating until Jan. 12

ST. GEORGE — The City of St. George, along with Washington County, the Utah Office of Tourism and the Zion National Park Forever Project, have teamed up to fund the operation of Zion National Park for one additional week during the federal government shutdown, from Jan. 6-12. Each of the entities contributed \$7,327 to the cause.

St. George Mayor Jon Pike said it was an easy decision for the City of St. George to join the coalition.

“Though this multi-agency collaboration is not surprising considering how well we work with each other, I’m so glad we banded together with the County, State and the Zion National Park Forever Project to develop at least a short-term solution to keep the park operating,” Pike said.

The shutdown has been in effect since Dec. 22, 2018, which means funding for national parks have had to come from sources other than the federal government. The State of Utah stepped up to fund the park until the end of 2018 and the Zion Forever Project, the official non-profit partner that raises funds for Zion through earned income in the park stores and through direct fundraising, supported park services Jan. 1-5.

“It is amazing and heartening to see how the State of Utah helped assemble this four-way coalition in a matter of hours to buy more time for the welfare of Zion National Park and to assure a better experience for the thousands of visitors who continue to come to Zion every day,” said Lyman Hafen, renowned local author and Executive Director of the Zion Forever Project. “The fact our state, county and city would deem this so important is a sign to everyone of what Zion National Park means to the lives and the livelihoods of all of us in Utah.”

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Memories are made, lives are enriched and the profile of the region is enhanced due to the presence of what is considered one of the most scenic areas in the United States. Zion National Park was the third most-visited National Park in the United States in 2017 with 4.5 million visitors. Many of these tourists come through St. George, spending money in local hotels, restaurants and retail shopping.

“While Zion National Park is our area’s biggest economic driver, the park means so much more to us than just dollars and cents,” Pike said. “Its splendor is part of our identity; the eye-popping color and dramatic features of the park are so awe-inspiring. It should be enjoyed by everyone — residents and visitors.”

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