



Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board held on August 10, 2023 at 6:00 P.M. at Gerlach Community Center, 410 Cottonwood, Gerlach, NV 89412

1. CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell, Russell Bierle, Brandy Wilbur, Kristy Evans, Tina Walters (Chair)

A quorum was established and the meeting was called to order.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT – Comment heard under this item will be limited to three (3) minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the agenda. The Citizen Advisory Board will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to three minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the Board as a whole. [non-action Item]

Gary Schmitt - He expressed concern and opposition to the GID's current zoning change application. He opposed the increase in density in the residential area and the proposed industrial zoning. They mentioned having a petition with 24 signatures against the zoning change and also filed open meeting law complaints. They provided a map and requested that the complaints and map be included in the record and minutes of the meeting.

Jonathan Young from DTS Fiber – He provided an overview of their efforts to secure funding for fiber internet services in the community. He mentioned a survey that they are conducting to gather information for a funding request with Washoe County. Jonathan Young also shared pricing information for the Gerlach community.

The DTS Fiber internet service is faster, more reliable, and cheaper than other options. It is proposed with free installation. A landline phone line can be bundled with the DTS service for \$9.99 per month plus additional fees. There is a program called Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) that provides a \$30 discount on the internet bill for low-income seniors. The county is working towards finding funding to pay for the installation of fiber, which is expensive.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS – Election of Chair and Vice Chair for the 2023-2024 year (for possible action)

Tina Walters is elected as the chair and Christy Evans is elected as the vice chair for the years 2023 and 2024.

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion is made to approve the minutes of the July 13th meeting. The motion to approve the minutes is seconded. The minutes are approved with one abstention (Russell Bierle).

6. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES – A Washoe County Sheriff’s Deputy and/or members from the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department may be available to provide a general community update on public safety [non-action Item]

Washoe County Sheriff’s Department - Preparations for the Burning Man event include the deployment of officers, dogs, motor officers, and supervisors. A training session on emergency management and active shooter scenarios was conducted at Ernest Johnson Elementary.

Participants express concerns about the departure of Deputy Foxx and Deputy Burns and inquire about who to contact to object to their simultaneous departure. It is suggested to start a complaint with Sergeant Diaz and escalate it up the chain of command.

Johnathen Prichard of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department - He provides an update on the number of calls, personnel, and upcoming events at the Gerlach fire station.

The participants discuss the collaboration with Pershing County Sheriff’s Office to set up a sexual assault trailer and nurse for Burning Man, as well as the involvement of Care Flight and upcoming training sessions. The fire station will be used as a location for sexual assault victims during the event to provide more privacy and easier access to medical care.

7. WASHOE COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY – A presentation by Washoe County Sustainability Manager Brian Beffort about the County’s efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, and improve quality of life for everyone in the County, with a short discussion of Team Climate-Resilient Gerlach’s inclusion in the Department of Energy’s Energizing Renewable Energy Prize. [non-action Item]

Brian Beffort presents on the topic of sustainability. The county has committed to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The speaker discusses the NZero platform for real-time energy and greenhouse gas emissions monitoring. The speaker mentions the need to reduce emissions across various departments, buildings, and vehicle fleets. The speaker talks about tracking and switching out light bulbs to LEDs in county facilities.

The Washoe County Green Recovery Plan is discussed, focusing on making communities more resilient to emergencies and climate change. The speaker mentions strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and invest in equitable multimodal transportation infrastructure. The speaker highlights the importance of soil and access to food, mentioning the reliance on trucking in food and the potential risks.

Reno is the fastest warming city in the nation due to the urban heat island effect caused by lack of tree cover. Planting more trees provides comfortable shade, oxygen, stormwater control, and potential food availability. The team has been awarded the Empowering Energizing Rural Communities Prize and aims to make Gerlach climate-resilient with net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Question from CAB member - The CAB and residents are interested in supporting the grant and project. They want to know how they can engage and provide support.

Answer – There are public meetings that we need to host. We need to talk to the people. The meeting is scheduled for tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. It is a team huddle, not a public meeting, focused on

work plan, assignments, deliverables, and deadlines. The outcome of the meeting can be shared with the public.

8. MASTER PLAN UPDATE OF THE HIGH DESERT - Eric Young, Senior Planner with the Washoe County Community Services Department, will provide an update on the Washoe County Master Plan, specific to the area plan of the High Desert. [non-action Item]

The community draft of the master plan update is available for review on the online platform called Conveyo. The speaker discusses the process of distilling and consolidating 18 documents into one master plan document. The Envision Washoe 2040 draft is mentioned as the first draft of the distillation. The speaker invites feedback and comments on various sections of the plan.

He discusses the development constraints and opportunities in the unincorporated county. Eric acknowledges the progress made by the Gerlach planning area and encourages the community to provide updates on new opportunities and constraints.

He expresses the need for photos of the area from the community. The discussion mentioned that the plan includes goals and policies based on community input. It was noted that the plan now includes county-wide goals and policies, instead of unique ones for each planning area. The discussion highlighted the similarity of issues faced by different areas, such as maintaining services and providing housing. Chapter 3, the implementation chapter, was mentioned as important for outlining how the plan will be carried out. The speaker describes the implementation plan in Chapter 3 of the draft plan, including tasks, lead agencies, partners, and funding sources.

Eric mentions that notices will be sent out and provides information on accessing the Conveyo platform for reviewing and commenting on the draft plan. He expresses the hope that the draft plan reflects previous conversations and invites feedback on any missed important conversations. The file will be posted with this month's CAB documents.

Question from CAB member - The speaker asks if there will be another in-person meeting in Gerlach.

Answer – Eric Young mentions that there is no in-Gerlach meeting planned but offers to consider it if the community expresses the need for it.

The speaker discusses the changes to the development code for different communities, including Warm Springs, the Forest Area Plan, and Spanish Springs. They mention that changing the rules requires significant community outreach and focused efforts. It is decided that there will not be any development regulation code changes as part of this update. Many regulatory code-like policies will be moved from the master plan to the development code without any changes. The timeline for implementing development code changes depends on prioritization and resource allocation. It could be done as early as next year if identified as a priority.

You can comment on every aspect of the plan. We would really like you all to comment on everything you like, dislike, want to be deleted, or however you want to interact with the plan.

Question – He expressed concerns about the implementation schedule and suggested earlier actions. They also discuss the need to consider landscape requirements based on the water table and annual rainfall in different areas of Washoe County.

Gary Schmitt - The discussion includes facts about the application of county codes to specific areas and the need for landscape requirements suitable for the driest desert community in Washoe County. People are interested in maintaining the rural character.

Eric Young – Candee Ramos is amazing and very helpful. Thank you.

9. COMMISSIONER AND BOARD MEMBER ITEMS — This item is limited to announcements and/or requests for future agenda items by CAB members and potential general announcements from the county commissioner and county manager. [non-action Item]

Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell - Shotzi provides information about the proposed geothermal lease sale, including the number of parcels and the comment period deadline. The discussion raises concerns about the proximity of the proposed site to Gerlach and the potential impact on the community. The speaker expresses concerns about leasing and the lack of environmental impact assessment. They mention the potential effects on water tables and hot springs. They also refer to a specific document on the BLM website that claims there is no impact.

10. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT – Comment heard under this item will be limited to three (3) minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the agenda. The public is encouraged to submit a “Request to Speak” form to the Board chairman. Comments are to be addressed to the Board as a whole. [non-action Item]

Gary Schmitt – The speaker raises concerns about GGID's zoning change application, arguing that it goes against the desire to maintain a rural environment. They suggest bringing the application before the board for impartial consideration.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 pm.