****  **Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board**

**Minutes of the regular meeting of the Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board held on**

**July 10, 2024, at 7:00 P.M. at Gerlach Community Center, 410 Cottonwood,**

**Gerlach, NV 89412**

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

A quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. This month’s meeting was held one hour later than normal to accommodate the Gerlach General Improvement District meeting which began at 5 p.m. and will return to its normal time of 6 p.m. in August.

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

1. **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)
2. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF MAY 9 AND JUNE 25, 2024,** for possible action)

The meeting minutes from the May and June meetings were not available to be viewed and acted upon. These meeting minutes will be reviewed and voted upon at the August meeting, along with the minutes for the July meeting.

1. **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 Office

The new Washoe County Sheriff's Office Deputy Stapledon was present to provide statistics on calls for the area, including traffic coming in to the area from the 4th of July, which there was less than in previous years, likely due to high temperatures.

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department Captain Jonathan Prichard was online to provide a public service update for Fire. Said that he had attended a FEMA workshop in Palm Springs and would soon be able to apply for grants.

Chief Pelt shared that the Insurance Service Office (ISO) inspector visit recently, which is an inspection they receive every 5 years to evaluate the fire service and water system to the fire rating for the community, for homeowners’ insurance. The last inspection in the area was a four and a four which is not bad for a rural community, with the hope that they will improve their rating for decreased homeowners’ insurance rates in the future. CAB member Bierle asked about a flow test, and Chief Pelt said that this could be accomplished in the future.

1. **VIAL OF LIFE UPDATE –** A member of thePyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department may provide an update on the Vial of Life program to help keep Gerlachians safe. [non-action item]

Chief Pelt said that he is continuing to work on getting the Vial of Life kits, but that there had been some roadblocks in achieving the goal of getting these for community members. It continues to be a priority, and he will work on this project.

He then shared that the Insurance Service Office (ISO) inspector visit recently, which is an inspection they receive every 5 years. CAB member Schatzi asked for clarification on what the Vial of Life is. Chief Pelt explained that this is a sticker on the door that individuals can place on their home so that first responders can effectively treat people in an emergency, having a greater knowledge of their health conditions and medications.

1. **COMMUNITY DISCUSSION REGARDING POSSIBLE LITHIUM MINE –** Community member Dave Cooper will provide information regarding an exploration and mining company with a possible interest in creating a lithium mine near Gerlach, for board discussion and possible advisement from the CAB to write letters of support or opposition to proposed mining developments. [for possible action]

Dave Cooper was available via Zoom to provide a report on the proposed lithium mine in the area from American Cellars Lithium out of Canada, to include that in December of 2022 the BLM had issued about 200 mining claims on 4,000 acres of land south of the Playa, which begin within a few thousand feet from his home, and also includes the GID 38 acres where a trailhead had been intended. Currently, the company is wrapping up its exploration of the area and will soon do an analysis of the soil samples, followed by additional exploration and digging deeper into the Playa. He suspects that following this, they would need drilling into the aquifer. He expressed his concern that should the mining exploration ever go to full development of a brine mining operation that this could pose a risk of to life and property in Gerlach. He urges citizens to organize now to attempt to stop the operation and suggested petitioning the BLM to deny further operations on the Playa until such time that proper environmental assessments can be finalized, and their voice is heard. He also would like to have the BLM completely withdraw the South Playa, about 14000 acres, from the 1872 mining law. He suggested working with Washoe County and the Nevada Legislature as part of the Lands Bill, or with the BLM directly. He claims that these mines should never have been issued through the BLM as it is not a part of the resource management plan for the Black Rock, which he authored. He has written to the BLM state director and to the Winnemucca district office of the BLM and to the black Rock field office manager, along with Senators Rosen and Cortez Masto. Having received no response as an individual, urges the community and CAB, as well as the County Commissioners, to become involved in fighting the possible mine. He has achieved the support of Patrick Donnelly, who is the with the Center for Biological Diversity. He pointed to the Armargosa Valley as having a similar situation and identified that a coalition had ben created along with the Nye County Commissioners and that they had pressured the BLM to withdraw permits for drilling. Urged the community to get involved and take action now.

Pete Dronkers asked of Dave Cooper about a possible Environmental Assessment for the north and south ends of the Black Rock. Dave Cooper said that the BLM is supposed to provide public notice when things like that occur, but he has not seen any notification. Mr. Dronkers agreed that he had not seen any activity in the area, and Mr. Cooper confirmed that the soil samples would not be very invasive and likely did not require a permit or draw much attention. He reiterated that the company has a valid existing right to do what they are doing now. Mr. Dronkers suggested connecting with Mr. Cooper to create a Google Group for the purpose of creating a listserv for future email communications. Mr. Dronkers said he is happy to take the lead on this as a communicator. Mr. Cooper suggested a coalition that could consist of the Nature Conservancy, the Gerlach Preservation Society, Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of Black Rock and Friends of the Nevada Wilderness. Kristy Evans said that they have an existing email group that was borne from the Ormat recent discussions. She asked if the drilling proposals would be open to public comment, but Mr. Cooper said he was unsure. She asked about the 1872 mining law and asked if the area was supposed to be removed from possible mining, is a lawsuit in order if the area had not been effectively removed? Mr. Cooper answered that likely, yes. Mr. Dronkers shared that he had spent years working on the 1872 mining law and knows an experienced attorney on this very subject, and the attorney had said there is no legal recourse. He said he could request a formal analysis, but that a lawsuit would not be likely to be successful. Kristy Evans suggested having interested parties come together for a community meeting to support a larger entity, rather than several small entities, would be wise. Mr. Cooper agreed to the idea of a coalition and community and working with the County Commissioner.

Carl Kopek provided comment that he is concerned about a large, industrial entity that wishes to take things away from the community but give nothing back. Encouraged the community to come together to petition against these things before it impacts the community’s water.

1. **NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING HUB STANDING AGENDA ITEM –** Candee Ramos, Washoe County Community Outreach Coordinator, to share the latest community information on the Neighborhood Meeting HUB featuring development community meetings.(non-action item)

Ms. Ramos shared her screen to show the Neighborhood Meeting HUB. Outlined that there are no upcoming events near Gerlach that would necessitate a neighborhood meeting.

1. **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)

Kristy Evans expressed appreciation that DTS Fiber had recently contacted her and how excited she was that broadband was coming to her home.

Schatzi Gambrell was appreciative of the DTS Fiber staff, but was frustrated that she would have to trench from the street to her house and provide piping. Would like to invite DTS Fiber to join the meeting next month to discuss her trenching issue, the homes that are farther removed from town, and to receive accolades.

1. **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)

Carl Kopek said that bringing larger stakeholders, such as Burning Man, would be beneficial and have a greater impact than working as individuals.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

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