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

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

**June 25, 2024, at 6:00 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) and Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell were present. Brandy Wilbur was absent.

A quorum was established and the meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

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)

Dave Cooper provided public comment expressing concern about a proposed lithium mine that may be explored near the Playa. Said that there are various companies that have done soil sampling already and wish to put together drill plans, which would be approved by the BLM, but he is uncertain if the BLM is aware of the proposed plans. Suggested having this as a topic at the July CAB meeting.

Casey Garnett with IEM is an emergency management company assisting the County, cities and the tribes, working to update the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Encouraged the community to participate in a public survey to better understand the community’s experience with disasters. CAB member Kristy Evans said that there are cards with the QR code to the survey available in the room.

1. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF MARCH 14, 2024** for possible action)

Schatzi Gambrell moved to approve the minutes. Vice Chair Kristy Evans seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously. There were no meeting minutes from the month of April to review or approve as the meeting had been cancelled that month.

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 introduce himself and provide an update, including an increase in calls to the area due to warmer weather for things such as calls for assistance for being stuck in the desert. Drivers visiting the area are slowing down while driving due to increased presence by deputies at the request of the community. Fish Springs has also seen an increase in calls.

CAB vice chair Evans asked if a speed trailer would be available during Burning Man which has been helpful in years past. Deputy Stapledon said that this would be a great time to bring it out, and that it is a useful tool and would request that it be brought out for the event.

CAB member Gambrell encouraged the posting of photos on the Facebook page “Stuck in Gerlach” because it is a common occurrence that the community likes to laugh about.

CAB member Bierle asked about RVs being camped in residential areas and blocking traffic and code enforcement with the new ordinance being passed about illegal camping. Inquired if there would be signs or other warnings about this new ordinance. Deputy Stapledon said that posting signs could work, as well as additional patrols. CAB member Gambrell commented that perhaps allowing individuals to rest briefly would be beneficial when considering sleepy drivers. She asked for a pause to the citations surrounding the ordinance for the timeframe surrounding Burning Man.

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department Captain Jonathan Prichard said that the previous month had seen 16 calls for service, 4 for medical and the remainder being for fire and calls for assistance. Suggested that with the rural nature of the area that people clear their cheatgrass to get rid of flammable brush, noting a recent fire in the Nixon area.

CAB vice Chair Evans expressed concern about dragging chains on Highway 447, asking if there is anything that can be done to mitigate fuels along the route. Captain Prichard said that the Nixon fire was a controlled burn by NDOT that had gotten out of control. Because of that incident, another controlled burn would be unlikely.

CAB member Gambrell asked for an update on the Vial of Life program that had been introduced the previous month. Captain Prichard said that Chief Pelt and Lisa Nash were working on this and the CAB could expect an update at the next month’s meeting.

CAB member Bierle asked if the Nixon fire was due to the “Great Wall of Tumbleweeds.” Captain Prichard said that the fire was at mile marker 11.

CAB Chair Walters asked about shutting down power due to the fire. Captain Prichard answered that this was true because power lines were in the line of fire as a preventive measure to avoid live power lines or destroying power poles.

CAB member Gambrell shared that a community member had shared photos with her of his yard that had been struck by lightning, resulting in a fire.

1. **ENERGIZING RURAL COMMUNITIES PRIZE** – Brian Beffort, Sustainability Manager for Washoe County, will provide an update on the Energizing Rural Communities Prize and the opportunities for a cleaner, more affordable community. [non-action item]

Washoe County Sustainability Manager, Brian Beffort, provided an update on the Energizing Rural Communities prize, which had been awarded to Gerlach in 2023. He shared that there is a public meeting coming up on Thursday, July 27at 6 p.m. in the Gerlach Community Center, where his team would be providing updates on what they have learned and what they are hoping to make their next steps. There will be representatives from the University of Nevada, Reno’s School of environmental Engineering to discuss systems designs for geothermal or solar systems, a presentation from the Nevada Clean Energy Fund on financing recommendations, a representative from N-Zero, the company that did the initial energy audit, and representatives the University of Pennsylvania. They will be discussing direct-air capture and the possible benefits of geothermal power.

CAB member Gambrell asked about the idea of putting parking structures in front of the senior center in order to accommodate a cooling/heating shelter. Mr. Beffort replied that this is on the list of possibilities and that if the community wished to pursue this and had the financial ability to do so, the County could make this happen. He said that his team will apply for the next rounds of funding and are working in conjunction with the University of Nevada, Reno for conceptual plans

1. **7.** **PROPOSED LETTER TO BLM** **FROM CAB** – Russell Bierle, CAB member, will provide a [draft letter](https://www.washoecounty.gov/CABS/GE_CAB/2024/Draft-BLM-Letter.docx) for review that would request annual town hall events as part of the annual permitting process for the Burning Man festival. [for possible action]

CAB member Russell Bierly read a draft letter to the BLM to request from the Gerlach CAB to host 2 town hall events as part of the annual permitting process to include GGID, CAB, Burning Man, BLM and Washoe County to discuss suggestions for upcoming years. The letter invited the BLM to the next CAB to discuss this proposal. CAB member Kristy Evans said that the date of the next meeting would be malleable, but other than that, she liked the meeting. It was decided that the letter could be approved with the date pending. A motion to approve the draft letter was made by Russell Bierly and seconded by Schatzi Gambrell. The motion was approved unanimously.

1. **BURNING MAN UPDATE –** Proposal to extend a formal invitation from the CAB to Burning Man leadership to the CAB meeting every October to receive feedback from the community. [for possible action]

Marnee Benson introduced herself as the director of government affairs of Burning Man and shared that Burning Man is wishing to provide annual updates to the community and an ongoing dialogue throughout the year. Mentioned information about the Dusty Dispatch newsletter which includes updates. She thanked Washoe County Manager Eric Brown for the County’s efforts in bringing broadband internet to Gerlach before diving in to information about the upcoming Burning Man event, law enforcement planning, EMS planning, and post-event cleanup. Ms. Benson described the event population as being targeted as the same as 2023, at between 72k and 79k in attendance and the dates will be August 25 through September 2. The footprint for the event presence in Gerlach will be different in 2024, with no trailers or RVs at the Showers property. She noted improvements that had been made following the January meeting, to include the request to remove the fence at the Showers property, and the general aesthetic improvements. Greg Herrera, the law enforcement liaison for Burning Man, introduced himself and his background as a longtime Sheriff’s Deputy in Washoe County. He thanked Washoe County Sheriff Darrin Balaam and recognized the new local Sheriff’s Deputies Stapleton and Harvey as tremendous assets to the community. He has established clear lines of communication with these Deputies to solve problems throughout the year. Shared an update that the Nevada State Police are also supporting the community during Burning Man and outlined increased law enforcement scheduled for the area. Identified the key concerns for the area as being traffic flow, enforcement of traffic laws, pedestrian safety, parking issues, commercial vehicle traffic concerns, and school bus safety. Outlined the planning meets that have occurred to help alleviate these issues. Thanked the Pyramid Lake Tribal Polie in helping with additional coverage and patrolling to support the Wadsworth and Nixon communities, and that the Black Rock Rangers will support the Gerlach community and act as mediators before higher level law enforcement response is necessary. Katie Hoffman is the agency relations manager for Burning Man provided an update on the EMS and Fire response additions will be available for increased first aid response. She then outlined the rigorous permitting process that Burning Man does with traffic management to include traffic plans and the implementation of those plans. She identified the traffic concerns from the 2022 event tied to the Empire Market, and that this year temporary vending permits are not being provided in that area, which should help with traffic flow. Ms. Hoffman then went into detail on the post-event clean up efforts, saying that they coordinate closely with volunteers and NDOT. She said that when it is safe to do so, their teams are out and cleaning up the roadways, which does not include in the exodus stage after Burning Man. They have identified hot spots requiring clean up, and have a plan for illegal dumping, working with a team to survey the roads and prioritizing different areas. She outlined the ‘Keep Nevada Beautiful’ campaign to encourage Burners to leave the area better than they found it and to avoid careless trash or illegal dumping. Marnee Benson then resumed speaking and mentioned the letter to the BLM that had been read previously during the meeting. She said that in March of 2024 that the CAB would extend a formal invitation to Burning Man to occur each year in October to receive feedback from the community. She reiterated her hope that Burning Man would be invited to this annual meeting and requested additional information as to how including the federal government (the BLM) in discussions will be helpful when the dialogue between the community and Burning Man has been established and determined moving forward.

CAB Chair Tina Walters said that the Estates area is looking very nice. CAB member Kristy Evans addressed the annual meeting in the autumn with Burning Man, and that the draft letter had asked for a Spring meeting. Said she wished for this to be more than a Burning Man meeting, but more for Washoe County to be aware of the community’s concerns area as their voice for the community with Burning Man and what they want heard during the permitting process. The idea is to collect feedback from the community and make actionable decisions that are more than simply complaints. She said she understands the need for safety in cleanup, but at times there are hazardous things that need quick clean up. Marnee Benson said that the Black Rock Rangers are a great route for addressing these immediate needs, and that the Rangers can reach Burning Man senior staff on the Playa to reduce any delays in addressing concerns. The clean-up dates can be outlined in the Dusty Dispatch. Ms. Evans asked when the community should expect a greater ingress of staff. Ms. Benson replied that she was unsure of the specific details based on staff, but that it would be like previous years. Schatzi Gambrell said that the Sheriff’s Office is doing a great job, but that residents in the area are frustrated by getting pulled over by law enforcement in front of their businesses or homes which further exacerbates the traffic concerns. She requested a bus schedule. Requested if the Dusty Dispatch can include the sparks caused by chains dragging the road, both by staff and attendees who may have possibly never pulled a trailer previously. Mr. Herrera said that working on public messaging surrounding this and doing demonstrations on safe loads and tips for safe pulling of trailers is on the horizon. Ms. Gambrell expressed appreciation for the road clean-up crews. Ms. Evans then asked for an update on the 360 project. Ms. Benson said that the details surrounding the project are still in motion.

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. Demonstrated how to use the map and the list of upcoming events in alphabetical order. She then outlined how citizens could sign up to receive email notifications on items of interest to them, including the Neighborhood Meetings. Russell Bierle asked for the transcription for the second 360 community meeting. Ms. Ramos said she would find out where the second recording is.

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)

Tina Walters discussed the date for the next CAB date as in July the meeting will coincide with the GGID meeting. Should the date by moved, or simply the time? Kristy Evans clarified if there will be a GGID meeting, and does it have to start at 5 p.m. Mr. Bierle said that the GID cannot move its time, but that the CAB can change its time or date and encouraged the CAB to be flexible. A discussion ensued about who should move their dates or times. It was determined that the CAB can remain on the same date, July 11, and that the time would need to be adjusted to begin at 7 p.m. instead of a 6 p.m. start time.

Schatzi Gambrell brought up the possible lithium mine nearby and referred to the mining claim mines, and would request that the BLM come to a CAB meeting to talk about this, as it is near the school. Requested that the BLM or the mining companies join. Ms. Ramos said she would connect with Dave Cooper offline so that they can discuss this in further detail.

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)

Dave Cooper expressed that the community should have been on top of the possible lithium mines to the community long ago, and that the issue should be elevated to the BLM, the Secretary of the Interior, the Black Rock field manager at the community should petition the county commissioners and the BLM to rescind these developers who wish to move forward with mining, as Nye County has had success in doing.

Carl Kobach provided comment to agree with what the previous commenter, Dave Cooper, expressed, about concern for mining near Gerlach as it could alter the water table. Also said that there are weeds at the County yard that should be removed.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Top of Form