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Description automatically generated**  **Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board**

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

**September 12, 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), Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell and Brandy Wilbur were present.

A quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order at 6:02 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)

Jason Walters made public comment that during Burning Man that members of the staff from the BLM were speeding and that this is not their jurisdiction in which they can do whatever they please.

Taylor Hubler commented that Burning Man treats the community as an afterthought due to a helicopter landing in areas near his home. Believes the event planners should be held to a higher ethical standard and act as a good neighbor during the event. Requested to have a conversation neighbor-to-neighbor to help prevent frustration and last moment adjustments.

1. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF JUNE 13, JULY 11 AND AUGUST 8, 2024,** for possible action)

CAB member Gambrell moved to approve the June 2024 minutes, and a second was made by CAB member Bierle. A vote was taken, and the June minutes were approved unanimously. Ms. Gambrell moved to approve the minutes for July minutes, and a second was made by Ms. Wilbur. A vote was taken, and the July minutes were approved unanimously. For the August minutes, Vice Chair Evans requested a review of the August recording to ensure that the landing zone for helicopters would be in the vicinity of the Senior Center and Fire House. Staff member Ms. Ramos said that she would check the recording and that this would be provided as a possible amendment to the August minutes for consideration at the October CAB meeting. The August minutes were tabled for review and possible amendment for a vote to be taken in October.

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

Deputy Cruz introduced himself as the newest of the two resident deputies in Gerlach. He identified that the speed of vehicles both entering and leaving Burning Man as being a priority this year, with many citations having been issued. He noted that this year’s Burning Man event was relatively quiet for law enforcement. Generally speaking, he encouraged residents to share concerns at any time and that the door of the Sheriff’s office is always open. Chair Walters noted that a fence had been damaged on Main Street. Deputy Cruz confirmed that this had happened by a visitor to Burning Man and that a member of Burning Man staff had been in touch with the Sheriff’s Office, who then put them in touch with the property owner, and the property owner and visitor are working together to fix the damage. Vice Chair Evans expressed appreciation for the deputies.

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department

Chief Don Pelt went over statistics from August, identified 13 medicals and 8 transfers to the hospital; one smoke sighting; one vehicle fire; 2 vehicle fires; 1 vehicle crash. Considering the Burning Man event separately, this added 8 additional medical transports, one additional brush fire, and 4 psychiatric transfers to facilities in Reno, 7 vehicle crashes, and assisted in the take off and landing of Care Flight. Noted that there had been an increase in call volume to the PLPT, which he said is positive as this indicates increased trust and confidence level from the community. Discussing the Care Flight public comment specifically, he apologized to the CAB and community for the disturbances. He identified that the contract that had been made was between Care Flight and Burning Man, and that the PLPT had offered to house Care Flight personnel. It was identified that the landing area for the helicopters would need to be within close proximity to the staff. The high school was unable to offer the space this year for the helicopter, and therefore the landing and takeoff area had been moved from where it has been previously to the new location, behind the fire station. To create a safe landing zone a 100-foot x 100-foot clear space is necessary and areas fitting this description were identified. He apologized that he should have spoken with the GGID and the community prior to making these decisions. He said that in future years, now that he is aware of the impact on the community members, that he would be sure to do so in upcoming years. Outlined the impeccable safety record of Care Flight. Vice Chair Evans acknowledged that there had been concerns, and that she also was appreciative of Chief Pelt and the PLPT. She asked if there had been increased Care Flight activity this year. Chief Pelt said that this year Care Flight was staged on-site in the community, which may account for the feeling of increased activity. Ms. Evans asked why they would be staged in the community of Gerlach versus on the Playa, since people live and sleep in the town. PLPT Captain Jonathen Prichard said that the fine dust at the Playa is a concern for the equipment, and therefore staging at the Playa is not feasible. He discussed having met with Burning Man management and the pilot team for Care Flight to identify the safest spot for the taking off and landing for the helicopters. Ms. Evans expressed a desire for a better location in 2025. Unrelated to Burning Man, Ms. Evans asked about the fire in Reno, and if the Gerlach area were under a fire watch. Captain Prichard said that yes, that the fire season is still in place and that brush fires are often active through December and that he would provide additional public education online, and that open burning is still restricted. Ms. Gambrell asked for an update on the Vial of Life. Captain Prichard said that the vials have arrived, and Chief Pelt said that now that Burning Man had subsided, that the vials can be distributed.

**6. COMMUNITY CONVERSATION –** Discussion by community members of recent events and nearby activities that impact Gerlach/Empire, to include ideas for what has been going well and what can go better. [For Discussion Only]

Chair Walters asked if there were any concerns or ideas on recent activities in the Gerlach community. Pete Dronkers, a member of the Burning Man team, said that he would relay the notes that he had been taking during the meeting to Burning Man leadership.

Ms. Gambrell said that the community is still short on housing availability and that the new resident postmaster cannot find a residence. She commented that this year, the community had remained clean throughout Burning Man and that the rangers had been visible, many individuals were cleaning up after themselves, and the portable restrooms had remained clean. Pete Dronkers from Burning Man said he would relay this to leadership.

Karl Kopec said that traffic makes emergency response via roads difficult, and appreciates having the helicopter on-site when minutes matter, despite the inconveniences. He also noted that locals must accept when the Burning Man event is over and when the community should go back to normal activity, including ongoing camping which is against ordinance.

Mr. Bierle spoke up to say that the helicopter concerns that had been expressed previously were not just about the helicopter, but more about the lack of community involvement during the planning process. There is a year-long planning process and encourages Burning Man to include the community leading up to the event so that last moment emergency changes do not need to be made, and identified communication as a key to future success.

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 Development HUB and outlined the recent meeting that had been held regarding the Empire MPA & RZA community meeting. She showed the notes from the meeting that had taken place. Vice Chair Evans inquired if the County has any power over when the developer holds the meetings, because there was discord regarding the meeting being held during Burning Man. Ms. Ramos indicated that she did not believe that the County planners have any authority over when the developers hold their meetings, based on posts on Nextdoor. Ms. Gambrell asked about housing development and the ability to provide water and sewer being a possible problem. Ms. Evans outlined that the project is about a possible rezoning, and there are opportunities for members of the community to research the project and make comment at the board of adjustment or planning commission. Mr. Bierle said that the possible changes will allow the business owner to continue the businesses he already runs during Burning Man while avoiding the Special Use Permit process.

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)

Vice Chair Evans asked if the Burning Man standing feedback item would be on the October meeting, and specifically requested that someone from Washoe County would be in attendance who would accept and retain the feedback received year-over-year for continuous improvement. Ms. Ramos from Washoe County said she could research who that person would be.

Ms. Gambrell reiterated the request to have information about the possible Lithium Mining company at an upcoming meeting. Ms. Ramos said that Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro would be the correct person for this conversation and he had assured her that she was working on this. Ms. Gambrell requested a copy of the High Desert Master Plan. Ms. Ramos said she would get this to her.

Chair Walters requested the possibility of having a member of the Planning team come to Gerlach once or twice per year as a pop-up planning day, where the County will come to them instead of them coming to Reno.

Vice Chair Evans had asked for an update on the Reimagining of the CAB program. Ms. Ramos shared that a presentation had been made to the Board of County Commissioners about the purpose of the Commissioner Support Team, statistics of previous years of CAB attendance, and ideas for possible enhanced community engagement. Ms. Ramos assured the community that future input would be requested and that ideas for the reimagination would be coming soon.

Mr. Bierle reminded the community that there is an upcoming Gerlach GID Town Hall meeting on September 19 and encouraged people to attend and provide ideas on usage of available funds. He said that this meeting would not be available for community input via Zoom.

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 thanked the emergency responders for making this year’s Burning Man event a success and looks forward to a better dialogue between the community and Burning Man.

Pete Dronkers gave kudos to High Rock Pizza.

Ms. Gambrell said she appreciated the Gate 1 entry pass to the Burning Man event.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

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