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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**

**August 8, 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 was absent.

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

There was no public comment.

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

Kristy Evans moved to approve the minutes from the May 9, 2024, CAB meeting. This was seconded by Schatzi Gambrell and then voted unanimously to approve.

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

Washoe County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Stapleton provided recent statistics which showed zero offenses, but increased calls for service. These can be for anything, such as being stranded and nothing of great concern. He noted that increased staffing is on deck as Burning Man approaches and that a speed trailer has been brought in to help reduce speeding. He also noted that there is increased patrol presence in the town of Gerlach, which is helpful. Kristy Evans expressed appreciation for his presence and the update.

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department

Johnathen Prichard was available and shared that they had a busy month to report, to include calls for transport. Increased staffing will begin August 17 in preparation for Burning Man. Chief Don Pelt updated the community that the Vial of Life packets had been ordered and they are waiting on them to arrive for the benefit of the community. Schatzi Gambrell said she was thankful to both Mr. Prichard and Chief Pelt in bringing in increased presence to the community.

1. **UPDATE ON BROADBAND AVAILABILITY TO HOMES IN GERLACH/EMPIRE** – Chief Information Officer for Washoe County, Behzad Zamanian, will provide an update regarding broadband internet capabilities to individual homes. [for discussion only]

Ms. Ramos invited the community to the community celebration of the expansion of broadband internet that will be taking place on August 14 from noon until 2 p.m. at the Gerlach Community Center. She said that food would be provided by Bruno’s County Club and expressed appreciation for Mr. Bierle for his assistance in securing the meeting space for the event.

Mr. Zamanian Zoomed in to the meeting and shared a PowerPoint presentation about the broadband expansion in Gerlach, sharing the background of the work that had already been done to bring high speed internet to the area, where the County is at now, and what is coming next. He said the County and DTS Fiber had been successful in completing fiber connectivity for 78 out of 108 homes in Gerlach, however some homeowners are not responsive to outreach from DTS. He requested aid from the CAB in connecting these homeowners with DTS Fiber. Mr. Zamanian continued that broadband internet fiber had begun being installed in Empire, also. Future communities for connectivity will be the North Valleys, Warm Springs and Washoe Valley, but that funding is a problem. He shared information about BEAD funding, which is provided by the federal government, which focuses on underserved communities such as Gerlach. He outlined the success Washoe County had with assisting with the dead zone for cell service on Pyramid Highway, by working with Verizon Wireless. He also said that T Mobile has a promotion where they are offering free hotspots. Ms. Gambrell asked about how funds are used and Mr. Zamanian responded that grand funding has to be used within certain timelines, which is one reason why Washoe County wants to get as much done as possible in a short amount of time. Any individual homeowners’ concerns, Mr. Zamanian encouraged community members to reach out to him directly for information and possible assistance. Ms. Evans gave kudos to DTS Fiber and offered that by working directly between DTS and a community member, the community member may be more successful in reaching the hard-to-reach homeowners that have not been responsive. Carl Kopek asked about getting a television repeater to the area, since many cannot access television programming. Mr. Zamanian said that the availability of fiber means there are no limitations of television connectivity since communications takes place through the fiber.

1. **NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE GREAT BASIN** – JJ Phoenix, a representative of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, will give a presentation about [Native Americans in the Great Basin](https://www.washoecounty.gov/CABS/GE_CAB/2024/Native-Americans-in-the-Great-Basin.pdf). [for discussion only]

JJ Phoenix, a representative of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the history and current importance of Native Americans in the Great Basin, including Nevada Urban Indians, tribal sovereignty, and the right to vote. He outlined that the current population for Native Americans in the area is around 3,000 with 800 living on the reservation. He outlined the Paiute, Shoshone and Washoe Tribes, as well as the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony as being a place that is reserved for Native Americans, as well as Hungry Valley. He then shared information about tribal sovereignty, which allows for reservations to have their own rights and create their own laws and their own legislation, its own court system, etc. He shared that Native Americans did not have the right to vote until 1924 when they officially became citizens, but that Native Americans are considered dual citizens, of the United States and of Indian nation. Kristy Evans gave thanks to Mr. Phoenix for his presentation and commented that she had been to the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Visitor Center and Museum and how much she had enjoyed the experience. Mr. Phoenix said that Billie Jean Guerrero, who runs the museum, has a wealth of knowledge. He then shared that the Tribe comes from recreation, taxes, grant funding, and the Pyramid Lake itself, including from fishing and camping fees, and how the schools work, to include the Bureau of Indian Education supporting the schools that do not fall under Washoe County School District. Schatzi Gambrell echoed Kristy Evans’ appreciation for the presentation and asked if Mr. Phoenix had any information on the bypass highway project, that will be from the Wadsworth exit to the Olinghouse Road by Hwy 447. Mr. Phoenix said that the planning stages are still underway with NDOT, but that the road would be completed eventually.

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 that there are no upcoming community meetings pertaining to development in the Gerlach/Empire area. She shared how one may find the HUB on their own and how to sign up to receive notifications of upcoming meetings.

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 suggested inviting the Lithium Mining company and the BLM to an upcoming meeting to address concerns in the area in October. BLM can do a Burning Man debrief at the same meeting.

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 expressed concern about the possible lithium mine and fears that the company will be “pumping and dumping” water onto the Playa and that having the government agencies allow private companies to deprive the community of water is irresponsible.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

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