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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**

**October 10, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. at Gerlach Community Center, 410 Cottonwood,**

**Gerlach, NV 89412**

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

A quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order at 6:04 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)

No Public comment.

1. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF** August 8, 2024 and September 12, 2024. (for possible action)

CAB Vice-Chair Evans moved to approve the August 2024 minutes and Tina Walters seconded. A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved unanimously. CAB member Evans moved to approve the September minutes and Brandy Wilbur seconded. A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

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 stated that things have slowed down the past few months and that their focus is directed more towards search and rescue, seeing as the community calls for minimal law enforcement. Deputy Cruz opened himself up for questioning. CAB Vice-Chair asked about what times they (he and Deputy Mike Stapleton) are present. He explained that he is there from Wednesday at 9am to Saturday 3:30pm and Deputy Stapleton is there Sunday at 9am Wednesday at 3:30pm and because of this there is a time gap where there isn’t a deputy directly in the community. Community member Stacey Black inquired about the best way to contact them for non- emergency situations. Deputy Cruz recommended the community to call the Washoe non-emergency line or their personal cell phones. He will also have business cards.

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department

Acting Fire Chief Captain Prichard went over statistics from September. There is still an uptick in traffic accidents. Prichard also stated that the community will see an increase in medical helicopters due to the winter months approaching. He informed the CAB of them having Winnemucca helicopter assist with a patient because they were closer to the incident and able to get the person to Reno quickly. CAB member Gambrell inquired about “vials of life” which was confirmed that citizens kits are available at the Firehouse and that some will be dropped off at the senior center.

1. **PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE TRIBE/WASHOE COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES UPDATE** ­­-Washoe County Manager Eric Brown and Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire & Rescue Chief Don Pelt will provide an update on the agreement for emergency services to the Gerlach community. [non-action item]

Chief Pelt confirmed the rumor about a miscalculation of financing for fire and EMS protection for Gerlach. He took responsibility and gave a few reasons for the error. First, he claimed he is new to the process and put the wrong number of hours for the contract request. Second, he claimed no one paid attention to the budget due to reliance on a few government programs (CARES act and ARPA). They went over budget by $200,000 in the second year of the contract; however, Washoe County was able to correct year two with left-over ARPA funds. The tribe has been working with County Manager Eric Brown and Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro to resolve this issue for year three, seeing as the budget for the 24/25 fiscal year has already been approved. Currently, they will have to brownout the Gerlach station up to four days a week (Monday - Thursday). This will start on November 2nd and may go up through June 30th. They are looking for any days where they can have an extra person to send them to Gerlach to have them answer calls during the day with any volunteers from Gerlach. The worst-case scenario being volunteers having to pick up the ambulance and meet with paramedics on the highway. He also noted that residents will see more helicopter traffic for major illnesses and injuries. They want Sheriff Balaam to waive the $35,000 dispatch fee to help reduce the number of days without fire protection. They can be flexible during this brownout period and can move the day to accommodate any community event needs. CAB Vice-Chair Evans asked if this would still be a potential issue for 25/26 fiscal year and the question was then directed to County Manager Eric Brown for answering. Manager Brown answered that it can extend into the next fiscal year as they don’t know the budget for that yet, but he gave his assurance that he will work to exhaust every resource possible. CAB member Evans also asked about why overtime consumes so much of the funding and Chief Pelt was able to explain that firefighters are not subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act and have 14 hours of overtime built into their work schedule every month. He highlighted a few reasons they went over budget: he miscalculated about 10,000 hours of overtime pay, the Tribe gave a 3% salary increase across the board and did not notify the County, and they did not account for the 14 holidays the Tribe gives to their employees. Vice Chair Evans had one last question about who pays for Burning Man and Chief Pelt confirmed that the fire support provided for them is paid for by Burning Man. CAB member Gambrell asked if they will have someone who is familiar with contracts to help them for the next one. The Tribe does now have a grants and contract person; they did not before. Specifically, they discussed the SAFER grant with Assistant Manager Dave Solaro. They are in the middle of trying to secure a grant for firefighter assistance that will help Gerlach by supplying updated equipment to match what is at Pyramid Lake. It was also mentioned that they have not laid off any personnel, but five firefighters have left for other departments. Stacy Black brought up concerns that there will not be firefighters staffed during school days. Chief Pelt has been in talks with Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro about getting funding for a nurse to help while they wait on any medical assistance that would come from Nixon. They are also trying to get volunteer EMT’s to help cover their brownout days.

1. **FINAL UPDATE ON GERLACH BOADBAND PROJECT ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­**– Behzad Zamanian, Washoe County’s Chief Information Officer, will provide a final update on the status of the Gerlach Community Broadband project and will provide final deadline details for Gerlach homeowners. [non-action item]

Washoe County Chief Information Officer Behzad Zamanian gave an update on Digital Technology Services (DTS) having completed their contract requirements. They were able to provide for about 80 homes with the service but were unable to reach about 25 homes. Five of the homes have declined the service altogether. Behzad would like to work with the community to reach out to the 25 homes. They will be closing the contract at the end of October. CAB member Evans will assist with reaching out to the 25 homes with addresses provided by staff member Candee Ramos and Behzad. CAB member Wilbur confirmed with Behzad that none of the address are in Empire. CAB member Gambrell stated that she knows a few of the addresses and expressed that some of the people feel concerned that if they get this service, they will also have to pay for the service. Behzad informed the CAB that the County pays for the installation of the infrastructure connection and citizens are not required to purchase or use the actual service. They may choose to turn on the service at a later point. Community member Carl informed Behzad that the DTS does cover his whole property and asked for information about their deal with T-Mobile to get his router subsidized. Behzad will share that information with him.

1. **NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB –** Staff to display the online HUB for review by the CAB members and/or attendees to determine if there are new or existing projects. [non-action Item

Ms. Ramos showed the neighborhood development hub which shows a meeting for Ormat Water Monitoring Wells on October 22, 2024. She also demonstrated how to sign up for emails from the county. Vice Chair Evans confirmed that the email subscription is the best way to find out when meetings for the community are.

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)

Commissioner Jeanne Herman Zoomed in but had nothing to say.

County Manager Eric Brown affirmed Commissioner Herman is aware of the fire and EMS situation and has been supportive. He unveiled a recognition signed by Commissioner Herman which recognizes October 1st, 2024 as Gerlach Volunteer Department Day.

CAB Vice chair Evans reminded the CAB of the upcoming Chili Cookoff. She also emphasized that Northern Nevada Public Health (NNPH) will be at the community center to provide COVID and flu vaccinations on Wednesday, November 6th.

CAB member Bierle reminded the community that they are always looking for new volunteers for fire.

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)

Community member Carl Copek brought up the Ormat project meeting and how he feels there was not sufficient notice. He went on to exclaim his happiness with the project not happening and thanked the Burning Man legal team. He maintained the importance of this victory in keeping the community as it is. He also brought up a proposed lithium development and that he would like to hear from government affairs, specifically Pete Dronkers of Burning Man. Additionally, he expressed concern for the fire/EMS situation and his hope to get back to 24hr fire coverage.

Pete Dronkers told Carl Copek that he had sent a memo to the CAB on the lithium mining. He noted specifically the differences between the 1872 Mining Law and geothermal leasing.

CAB member Gambrell thanked the Commissioners and community for standing up at that meeting and reinforced the importance of working with your public officials and that it takes a whole community to get some things done.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

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