



North Valleys Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes of the regular meeting of the North Valleys Citizen Advisory Board held on November 12th, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. North Valleys Library (1075 N Hills Blvd. Reno, NV 89506)

1. CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

PRESENT – Teresa Aquila, Roger Edwards, Wanida Black

ABSENT – Aaron Jennings

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES for August 12, 2024, and October 14, 2024, meeting.

The minutes for the August 12th and October 14th CAB meeting were approved.

4. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Jonnica Bowen, the branch manager of the North Valleys Library, shared concerns regarding the significant budget impact the library system is facing following the rejection of a ballot initiative WC-1 for funding. She explained that the loss of funding could lead to staff cuts, affecting services and the ability to host public meetings at the library. Starting January 2025, the library may no longer be able to accommodate meetings like the Citizen Advisory and Neighborhood Advisory Boards due to staffing shortages. Bowen encouraged the public to use the Speak Up app to express support for library services, particularly for the North Valleys area, to help address the funding deficit.

Nevin Armstrong, an 86-year-old resident, expressed frustration about the increasing financial pressures he faces. He criticized government policies, particularly the rise in taxes and the cost of living, which he feels are making it harder for people like him to get by. He shared personal struggles, including being burdened by Social Security taxes despite earning a modest income, high medical expenses, and the financial strain of owning and maintaining a vehicle. Armstrong also criticized recent government spending, such as freeway expansions, suggesting that funds could have been better spent on projects like a monorail. He called for a break for people in his situation, feeling that the current system is not responsive to the needs of seniors and those struggling financially.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES

Washoe County Sheriff Department

Lieutenant Armando Avina provided a public safety update, beginning with a report on a recent fire in the southern region, where his team worked closely with Truckee Meadows Fire. Thankfully, by 9:30-10:00 PM, all evacuations were lifted, and roads were reopened, thanks to coordinated

efforts and favorable weather conditions. As the holiday season approaches, Avina warned about the increase in package thefts due to the rise in online shopping. He encouraged residents to take precautions by having packages delivered to secure locations, using surveillance cameras, or asking neighbors for help. He also suggested using secure delivery boxes offered by companies like Amazon to prevent thefts. With winter weather on the way, Avina reminded drivers to slow down in adverse conditions and emphasized the importance of having proper tire tread for safe driving. He advised people to carry warm clothing in their vehicles and use reflective vests if they need to exit the vehicle on the side of the road, particularly in low-visibility conditions. Avina also shared that while overall dispatch calls have decreased, initiated calls such as traffic stops, and citizen interactions have increased. He encouraged residents to stay vigilant and report any suspicious activity, such as unfamiliar cars parked in the area, and stressed the value of neighborhood watch programs. Finally, Avina addressed a concerning rise in DUI arrests, noting that driving under the influence continues to be a serious problem. He highlighted the significant legal and financial consequences of DUIs and urged people to use alternative transportation like Uber instead of driving while intoxicated. Avina concluded by emphasizing the importance of staying safe, especially during the holidays and in winter conditions.

6. WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS AND RESOURCES -

Brent Taylor, Wildfire Urban Interface Coordinator, provided an update beginning with a summary of recent emergency calls in the north valleys. These included four fire calls, 146 EMS calls, 10 motor vehicle accidents, five hazardous materials incidents, nine public assists, 54 good intent calls, and five false alarms, totaling 233 calls across various stations. He shared that fire restrictions were lifted last month, allowing activities like warming fires and charcoal briquette fires. However, open burning remains prohibited until December 1st. After that date, open burning will be allowed outside the Truckee Meadows hydrographic basin and on parcels larger than an acre, with permits available through the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District's website. Taylor also noted that open burning permits will be available for December and January, with a full month of open burning scheduled for December. He mentioned that the usual yard cleanup period, traditionally in March, will likely shift to April this year, based on local habits.

Brent Taylor gave an overview of creating defensible space around your property to improve its survival chances during a wildfire. He highlighted three key zones from the University of Nevada's "Living with Fire" program: ember-resistant zones, clean, and green zones, and reduced fuel zones. These areas are essential in making property more fire-resistant. Taylor stressed the importance of "home hardening," which involves reinforcing the structure to prevent fire damage. Key recommendations include cleaning gutters regularly to remove debris and installing 1/8th-inch mesh screens on vents to prevent embers from entering the attic, which is a major fire risk. He also mentioned more expensive hardening measures like fire-resistant siding and roofing, though the most cost-effective improvements are gutters and vents. He discussed common fire hazards like dead vegetation and the accumulation of debris from live plants, emphasizing that even green plants can pose a risk if they have dead material underneath. Additionally, he warned about invasive plants like cheatgrass, which burn quickly and can spread fire rapidly. Spacing between trees and plants is also crucial to prevent fires from connecting to structures, and he advised keeping the area under trees clear of vegetation to prevent fire from climbing into the tree

canopy. Taylor discussed the importance of maintaining defensible space around homes to reduce fire risk. It was recommended to keep the area 0-5 feet from the house clear of vegetation, using hardscaping or gravel instead of bark mulch, which could catch embers. The goal was to prevent fuel from accumulating near the house, as burning debris could melt and spread fire to the home. The principle of "lean, clean, and green" was emphasized, where dead vegetation was removed, and existing plants were spaced apart to avoid a continuous fire path to the house. Trees are to be kept 15 feet from the roof, and shrubs should have been spaced twice their height apart. Regular yearly maintenance was advised to clear out dead plant material, preventing larger problems from developing over time. The speaker also highlighted the importance of keeping vegetation away from outbuildings, especially those storing hazardous materials like propane tanks, which could cause bigger issues if ignited. Certain plants were recommended for their low-maintenance and low-water needs, such as deciduous trees, which were less flammable. In contrast, plants like junipers and cypress were to be avoided, as they were highly flammable and could exacerbate fire risk. Additionally, the speaker mentioned useful resources, including the "Living with Fire" website for more information, and community programs like curbside green waste pickup and open burning. Firewise USA was presented as a program that could help communities reduce fire risk and potentially lead to benefits like insurance premium reductions. Truckee Meadows offered free workdays to Firewise communities for green waste removal and other fire safety efforts.

Brent Taylor discussed the current situation with major insurance companies, such as State Farm and Farmers, which have been canceling policies due to increased claims related to various disasters, including wildfires. Despite Nevada having a strong insurance market, these companies are reducing their risk exposure by cutting back on policies in certain communities, citing wildfire risk as the main reason. The speaker reassured listeners that homes with proper defensible space and fire-hardening measures would likely not be at risk in a fire, even in high-risk areas. Furthermore, new insurers, like AAA, are entering the market to pick up policies abandoned by the larger companies, as they seek to expand their business in regions with wildfire risk. The speaker recommended that homeowners affected by cancellations should shop for new insurance policies through brokers or other services, as alternatives are available. While costs may vary, it was emphasized that cancellation does not mean the end of finding insurance.

Roger Edwards asked Brent Taylor several key questions regarding insurance and fire risk. First, he inquired about how to know if an insurance policy would be canceled, to which Brent explained that insurers are legally required to give 60 days' notice before cancellation, often citing fire risk. For instance, some policies were canceled for properties simply because they were over 30 years old or in a high-risk zip code. Next, Edwards asked about the risk posed by a wood fence when surrounded by 60-year-old pine trees. Brent clarified that, ideally, the fence should be metal, separated by at least 5 feet from the house to prevent fire spread. He reassured Edwards that a wood fence itself is not typically a fire hazard unless there's significant fuel buildup, noting that fires generally spread more through dead brush and flashy fuels. Edwards then asked about the risk posed by pine trees. Brent explained that healthy pine trees usually don't catch fire easily, but fire risks are heightened if the trees are in poor health or

suffering from drought or disease. He mentioned that wildfire risks are mostly due to the understory fuel, which is why prescribed burns are used to manage this fuel. Lastly, Edwards asked about fire conditions related to wind. Brent pointed out that strong winds, like those in Washoe Valley, are key contributors to wind-driven fires, which can spread quickly under the right conditions.

A resident asked Brent Taylor about enforcement when a neighbor's property is overgrown and not meeting defensible space requirements. Taylor clarified that local codes are not designed for enforcement beyond the inspection process for new builds or remodels. After the inspection, defensible space compliance is expected, but there are no enforcement mechanisms for ongoing maintenance of defensible space. Unlike California, which has strict enforcement, the local approach focuses on working with communities to provide guidance and encourage cooperation between neighbors to address fire risk without creating conflicts.

7. UPDATE ON BROADBAND FOR RANCHO HAVEN -

Behzad Zamanian provided an update on broadband expansion projects in Washoe County. He began by discussing the 2022 initiative to improve connectivity in rural areas, identifying priorities for the Gerlach, North Valleys, Warm Springs, and Washoe Valley areas. The first phase involved installing 75 miles of fiber between Reno and Gerlach, partnering with the state and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. The project was completed in 2023, connecting county facilities, businesses, and some homes in Gerlach. Phase 2 extended the project to bring high-speed internet to all homes in Gerlach and Empire. By October 2023, 140 out of 156 homes in Gerlach had signed up for the service, a successful outcome. The next priority was North Valleys, Warm Springs, and Washoe Valley. These areas presented challenges due to rough terrain, so funding was sought through the federal BEAD (Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment) program, which allocated \$42.45 billion to expand high-speed internet across the U.S. Washoe County worked with the state to define funding zones and challenge processes, aiming to secure funding for broadband in North Valleys. Zamanian also provided examples of specific funding allocations for areas like Rancho Haven and Antelope Valley. For instance, Rancho Haven's fiber installation costs were estimated at \$3.5 million, with 75-80% of the costs covered by the BEAD program. ISP providers are currently submitting bids, with plans to finalize vendor selection by February 2024. Additionally, the Rancho Haven community center was connected to high-speed internet, and similar support was offered to other community centers upon request.

8. NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB –

Sally Johnston confirmed there are no upcoming neighborhood development but demonstrated a quick overview of how to use the hub to see who attended and who got sent notifications.

9. BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS/DISCUSSION –

There were no announcements made.

10. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 P.M.

DRAFT